ISSN 0712-7774

$2.25USA • $2.75CANADA • £1.25UK

CEREBUS
mothers & daughters
16

166
JAN

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

December 18; the day before Gerhard's annual Christmas party out at the ranch (well, to a city person it looks like a ranch). The Tour has now been over for five days and I've never felt better. Really.

★★★★★★★★★★

Cleveland. Due south across Lake Erie from Kitchener. Straight line. Never noticed that before until I saw the map. A quick puddle jump and then you can have a smoke. Arrived around dinner time and then had an interview that night at the CBS outlet (WJW-TV 8). Eleanor Hayes was the contact name. When she came out to meet me, I thought this must be the assistant producer. I mean, she was very nice, very friendly. She turned out to be co-host of the *Neighborhood* show. I figured she must either be really new at this, or it was a very small show. Taped the segment and we made vague plans to get together. She gave me her card and it said "Reporter/Anchor" on it. Figured it must have been a typo. Sent her some flowers the next day and asked in the card if she wanted to go dancing. Way out Euclid Avenue to WJMO for an interview with Kevin McMillan which went very well. Then back to the hotel for a last minute interview with Tom Corrigan of the Sun newspapers chain and a quick photo session. Played telephone tag with Eleanor who was out on assignment. Wrote the text pieces for 165. Flipped on the TV at five o'clock and there she was. Co-anchor. A real-life Murphy Brown. Called Friday again and she said she was getting over a cold, so she didn't think dancing was a good idea, but how about dinner. Watched her on the news while I was getting ready and had to smile as she wished everyone a great evening. She gave me a tour of Cleveland before dinner. Very weird, the double-takes people were doing. "That's her." "Isn't that . . .?" Anyway, (I think this is funny) after dinner, the check arrives and I pick it up and she says "What are you doing?" I said I'm paying the check. I phoned you and invited you out. She said "You invited me to go dancing. *I* asked *you* out for dinner." It's not often I lose an argument with a woman, but she had me there. She promised to drop by the convention on Sunday.

On the comic book side of things, I was invited out for dinner Thursday night with Jim Williams (manager of the signing store, *Super City Comics*) Frank Forkapa *(Triple Play),* Nick Varga *(Comic Specialties),* John Buntin Jr. *(Kenmore Komics),* John Cameron *(JC Comics).* It was the week *Superman* 75 shipped and I don't think any of us said a word about anything else for the first hour. A monumental event, no doubt about it and there I was in Siegel and Shuster's home town. After dinner we headed over to the Capital City warehouse where I had a chance to chat with a few more retailers and manager Mike Vokac (who even gave me a copy of *Superman* 75 which I proceeded to make worthless by tearing open the bag and actually reading it). Saturday was the signing at *Super City,* which went very well. The store is owned by Mike Pincus, a very good friend from the Mid-Ohio Con days. Jim, Michael Johnson (soon-to-be self-publisher) and I headed back to the hotel where we hooked up with Gerhard and Jeff Smith, had dinner (The Great Pincus made a cameo appearance) and then proceeded to do the stupidest thing you can do the day before a con. We got toasted. Plastered. Whaled. We ended up at the club in the hotel whose gimmick was serving bottled beer in little paper lunch bags. And we drank a lot of it. I drank a lot of Jack Daniels and practiced (quite extensively) my Keith Richards impression. Of course the alarm went off way too early the next morning and I realized I had a radio interview to do with Mike Olshefsky at 9:30 a.m. I had never done an interview with a pounding hang-over and I have resolved never to do so again. The convention (which was up against two other conventions the same weekend in a city that never has conventions) was small, but enthusiastic and a lot of fun. Jeff Smith's Mum and Dad showed up (Jeff had to send his Mum out of the room after a while because she was, like, annoying him in front of the fans by, like, being too Mum-like). Ger and I went for dinner in the restaurant and I had just finished telling him about Eleanor when she walked in. She had accidentally locked her car in the garage and couldn't get the automatic garage door opener to work (I thought it would make a great human interest piece on the five o'clock news, but she disagreed). I was sorry she missed the convention because I was quite looking forward to jumping up and shouting "Look! Isn't that the Famous Eleanor Hayes the Famous News-Anchor from Famous WJW-Famous TV 8?")

She gave Ger and I a lift to the airport and one puddle jump flight later, it was twenty-three cities down, one to go.

★★★★★★★★★★

Wednesday I flew into Dallas/Fort Worth and was met by Diana Schutz and John Christian. What was Diana doing all the way down in Texas, so far from her Portland home base? Well, hey. None of your business. The three of us went down to Dealey Plaza (I had to give native Texan John Christian directions) and then took the newly-inaugurated Sixth Floor Tour which was really a lot better than I expected. Then we had dinner in the revolving restaurant on top of the Hyatt Regency Hotel (inside that big Starburst Thang Y'kin See Frum Clear Acrost Town). Then we drove two hours to Killeen, Texas. Lights out since the next morning started with a 9:30 a.m. radio interview at KLFX-FOX 105.5 FM with John Hart on his morning show, a few blocks from the hotel (John and Martin Wagner came along to lend moral support). Then it was back to the hotel for breakfast where Diana joined us; then off to the *Killeen Daily Herald* where I was interviewed by Rodney Chapman who embarrassed John by showing him an edition of the paper from Tuesday with a "Dave Sim is Coming" article in it that John

CONTINUED ON PAGE 1 OF AARDVARK COMMENT

PRINTED IN CANADA

CEREBUS

NO. 166 JANUARY 1993

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
a novel

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to Cerebus 162)
Flight

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to Cerebus 174)
Women

•

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to Cerebus 188)

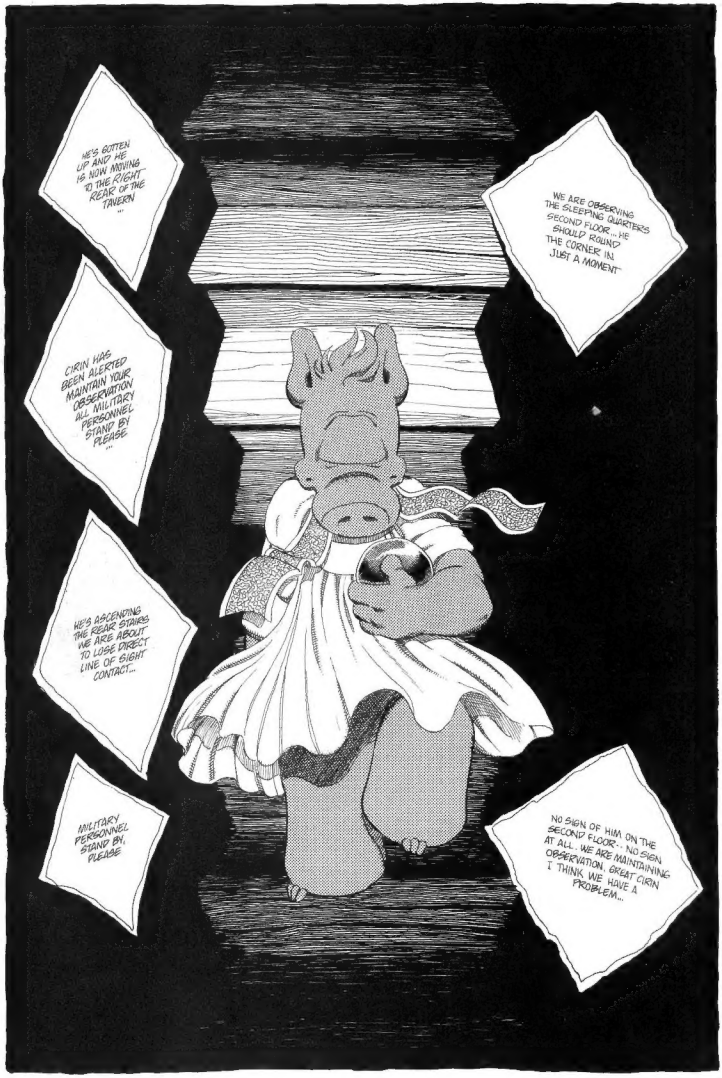
•

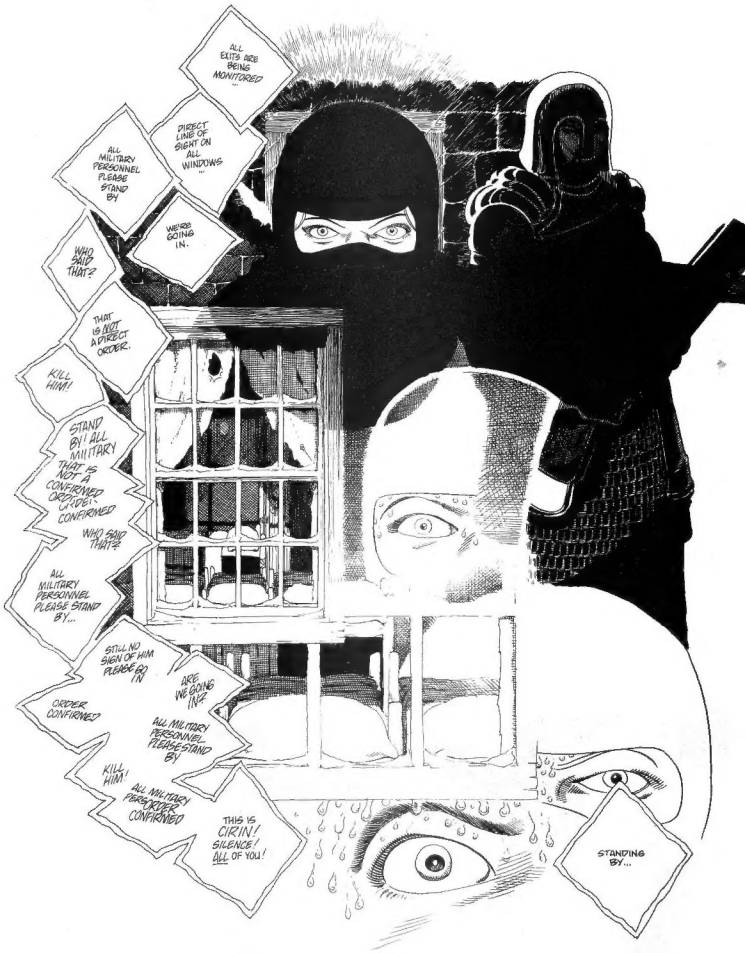
BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 189 to Cerebus 200)

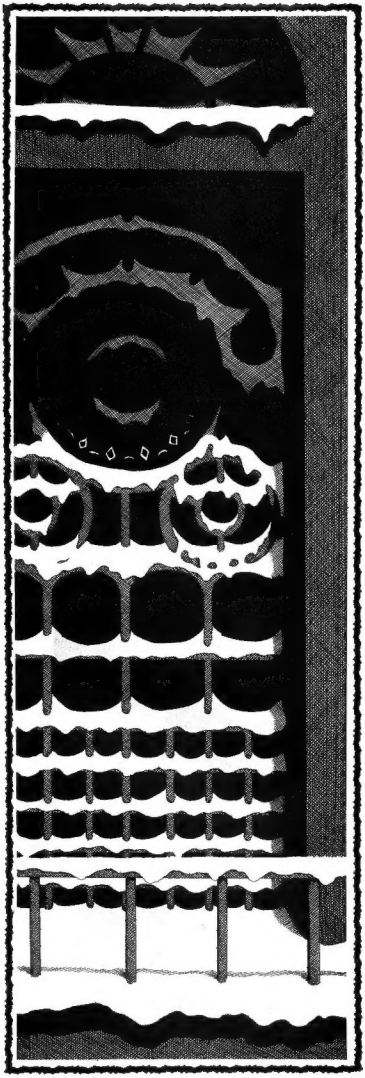
CEREBUS IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. P.O. BOX 1674 STN. C, KITCHENER, ONTARIO, CANADA N2G 4R2
ALL CONTENTS © 1993 DAVE SIM.
PRINTED IN CANADA BY **PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC.,** WINDSOR, ONTARIO.

SO! WHO D'YEW BOICE WHAT FOOR...?
SHH!
LOOKEE YONDER... 'IH' POPE'S A-SLEEPIN'
HE EES STEEL DE POP...E
'COURSE 'E IS, IDJIT... 'E DINT GIT IMPEACHED DID 'E E
'R WHUDEVER IT IS YUH DO WHEN Y'GIT RID OF A POPE...
HE EES STEEL HULDING HEES SWORT
MEBBE HE AIN'T REALLY ASLEEP. MEBBE 'E'S JEST PERTENDIN'
SHHHHH...
SHHHHH...

THAR Y'GO..
AH TOLD YUH HE WUZN'T SLEEPIN'
I THEENK HE EES.. HE EES SLIP WUKEEN
NUH! NEVDIR WACK A SLIP WUCKER
VER' DENGEROOSE
WUDDID HE SLIP IN? AH MISSED SOMETHIN'
NUH NUH
SLIP
WUKKIN
HE BES FEST ASLIP ..
WUKKIN' IN HIS SLIP...
AH WUZN'T GONNA WHACK 'IM
AH WUZ JEST A-GONNA NUDGE 'IM A BIT...
OH
MEBBE WE SHOULD WAKE HIM UP...
Y'U PUNT UNDAIRSTEND -- I SED PUNT WAK HEEM
AH HEARD YUH TH' FARST TIME, VARMINT AN AH TOLD YUH...
AN AIN'T GONNA WHACK 'IM
THIS GOOT.


HE'S GOTTEN UP AND HE IS NOW MOVING TO THE RIGHT REAR OF THE TAVERN ...
WE ARE OBSERVING THE SLEEPING QUARTERS SECOND FLOOR... HE SHOULD ROUND THE CORNER IN JUST A MOMENT...
CIRIN HAS BEEN ALERTED MAINTAIN YOUR OBSERVATION ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL STAND BY PLEASE ...
HE'S ASCENDING THE REAR STAIRS WE ARE ABOUT TO LOSE DIRECT LINE OF SIGHT CONTACT...
MILITARY PERSONNEL STAND BY, PLEASE
NO SIGN OF HIM ON THE SECOND FLOOR... NO SIGN AT ALL. WE ARE MAINTAINING OBSERVATION, GREAT CIRIN I THINK WE HAVE A PROBLEM...


ALL EXITS BEING MONITORED...
DIRECT LINE OF SIGHT ON ALL WINDOWS...
ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL PLEASE STAND BY
WE'RE GOING IN.
WHO SAID THAT?
THAT IS NOT A DIRECT ORDER.
KILL HIM!
STAND BY! ALL MILITARY
THAT IS NOT A CONFIRMED ORDER!
CODE CONFIRMED
WHO SAID THAT?
ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL PLEASE STAND BY...
STILL NO SIGN OF HIM PLEASE GO IN
ARE WE GOING IN?
ORDER CONFIRMED
ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL PLEASE STAND BY
KILL HIM!
ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL CONFIRMED
THIS IS CIRIN! SILENCE! ALL OF YOU!
STANDING BY...



General Greer:
Great Cirin, I think . . . I strongly recommend that we go in.

Cirin:
And if he's just standing on the steps up to the second floor? Or if he was just an illusion?

General Greer:
I just don't think we can afford the risk. If we can't see him . . .

Cirin:
A few dozen armoured soldiers breaking into a quiet little tavern in a quiet little neighbourhood? You'd make us a laughing-stock . . .

General Greer:
But if he's . . . if he's actually the . . . if he's the one that they've all been . . . waiting for . . .

Cirin:
A folk tale. A lower City folk tale and that's going to be your reason to violate the Alcohol Sanction. I thought you had a little more back-bone than that, General.

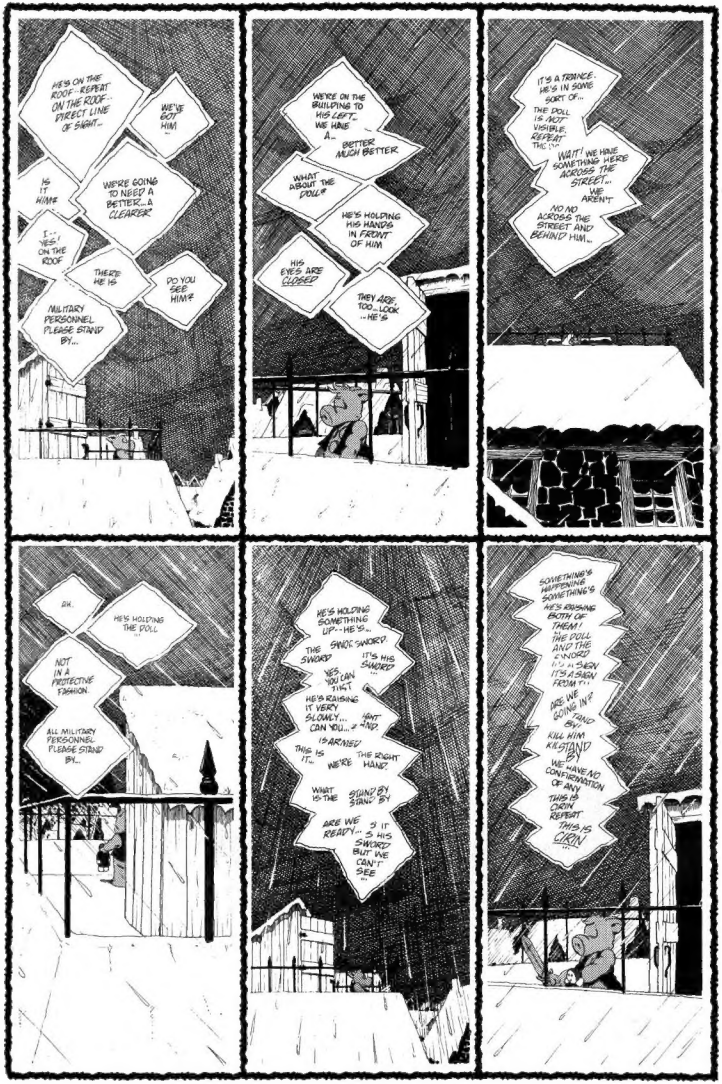
General Greer:
I'm not saying that he is. Far from it. But if they believe that he is. I don't really see how we can . . . I think the risk . . .

Cirin:
I think we are all going to be better served by concentrating on the True Ascension and remaining calm. Panicking over a folk tale is hardly going to assist us in that, is it, General.

General Greer:
Great Cirin, I just mean to . . .

Cirin:
Is. it.

General Greer:
No, Great Cirin. I'm sorry. You're right, of course. Praise the Goddess.


HE'S ON THE ROOF... REPEAT ON THE ROOF... DIRECT LINE OF SIGHT...
WE'VE GOT HIM
IS IT HIM?
WE'RE GOING TO NEED A BETTER... A CLEARER
I... YES! I SEE ON THE ROOF
THERE HE IS
DO YOU SEE HIM?
MILITARY PERSONNEL PLEASE STAND BY...
WE'RE ON THE BUILDING TO HIS LEFT... WE HAVE A...
BETTER MUCH BETTER
WHAT ABOUT THE DOLL?
HE'S HOLDING HIS HANDS IN FRONT OF HIM
HIS EYES ARE CLOSED
THEY ARE TOO... LOOK ... HE'S
IT'S A TRANCE. HE'S IN SOME SORT OF...
THE DOLL IS NOT VISIBLE. REPEAT THE...
WAIT! WE HAVE SOMETHING HERE ACROSS THE STREET...
WE AREN'T
NO NO ACROSS THE STREET AND BEHIND HIM...
OK.
HE'S HOLDING THE DOLL
NOT IN A PROTECTIVE FASHION.
ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL PLEASE STAND BY...
HE'S HOLDING SOMETHING UP... HE'S...
THE SWORD
SWORD SWORD!
IT'S HIS SWORD!
YES YOU CAN TINT.
HE'S RAISING IT VERY SLOWLY... CAN YOU...?
TINT AND
IS ARMED!
THIS IS IT...
WE'RE
THE RIGHT HAND
WAIT IS THE
STAND BY STAND BY
ARE WE READY...?
IS HIS SWORD? BUT WE CAN'T SEE...
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING SOMETHING'S HE'S RAISING BOTH OF THEM! THE DOLL AND THE SWORD! IT'S A SIGN IT'S A SIGN FROM...!
ARE WE GOING IN?
STAND BY!
KILL HIM KILL HIM!
STAND BY!
WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION OF ANY
THIS IS CHRIS REPEAT THIS IS JIRON...

Cirin:
I'm going to say this to all of you, and I am only going to say it once. This panic has got to stop. This panic *will* stop. He is not behaving in any manner that we might have anticipated. That only increases the likelihood that he is an illusion; pure and simple. Do you understand me? You are to maintain observation. There is nothing complicated or difficult about that order, now is there? If he starts making a speech, you are authorized to go in. Nothing too complicated or difficult about that, either, is there? We are nearing the day of the Final Ascension. Everything is running very, very smoothly. You are Soldiers of the Goddess. I expect you to behave as such. If I become aware of any one of you behaving like some weak, snivelling . . .

General Greer:
Great Cirin.

Cirin:
How dare you interrupt me. That is exactly the sort of . . .

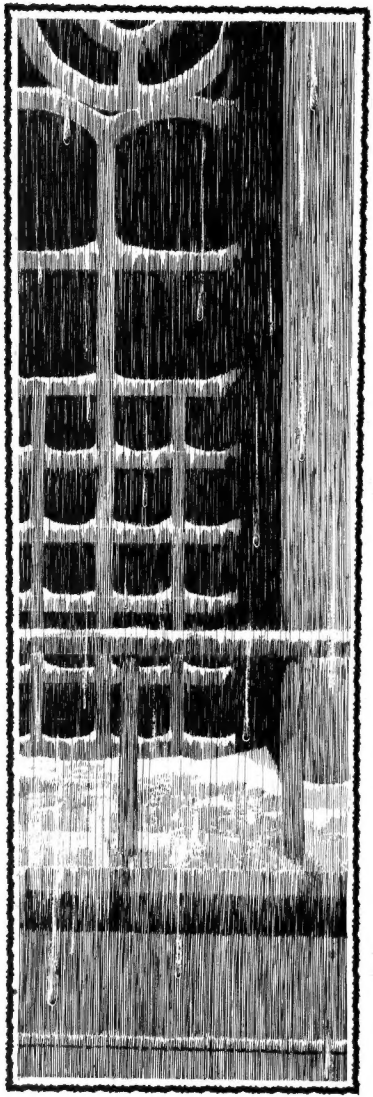
General Greer:
Great Cirin, look outside.

Cirin:
It's raining. Yes. By the Goddess are you now afraid of a little . . .

General Greer:
The Tower, Great Cirin.

Cirin:
The Tower? What about the . . .

Cirin:
Oh. Oh my.



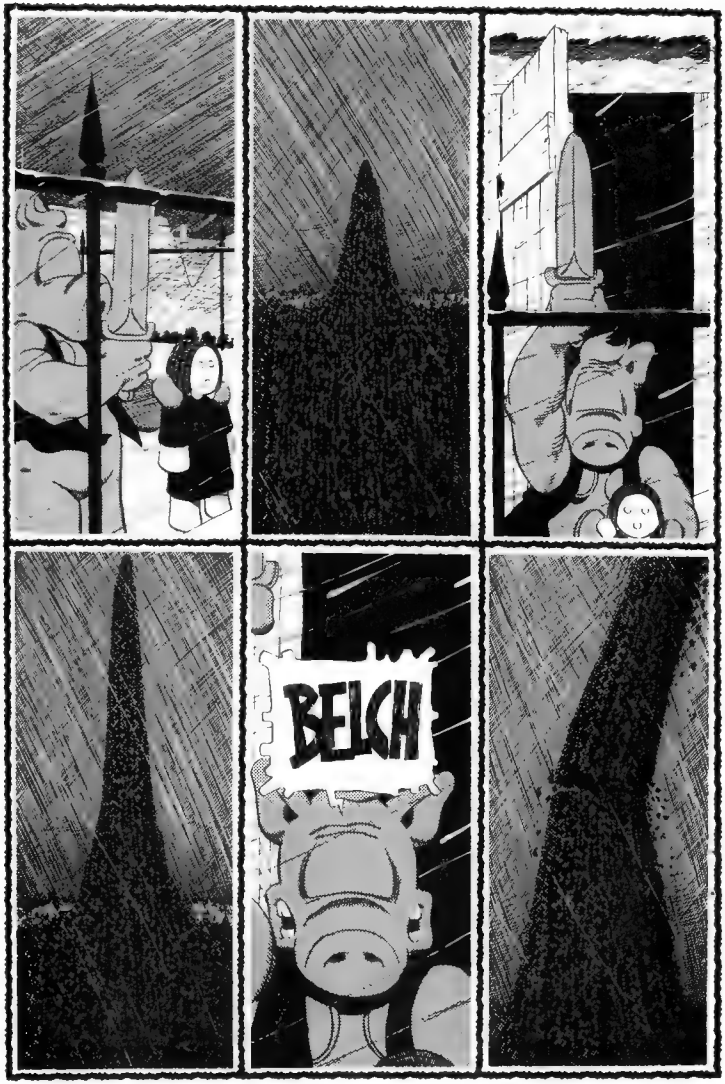
In the history of Iest, there have been several attempts, some real, some illusory, at an ascension into heaven. In each case, the individual attempting that ascension has been male, In each case, the Tower has risen erratically, and has been structurally unsound. In each case, it has then collapsed on the Lower City, causing massive destruction, nearly unimaginable loss of life and injury. This, then, is the surest sign that exists of the Goddess' intolerance of male-dominated, male-directed society. It will be a mother who ascends, when the time comes. And that time will be soon. The Goddess will reach down to us, even as we reach up to Her. When that glorious connection is made; when that wondrous day arrives; the long-promised Golden Age will dawn and our successes and triumphs in Upper Felda will pale by comparison; mere flint, mere stone, mere spark, beside the miraculous, world-wide Blaze of Glory that is yet-to-be.

Cirin
The New Matriarchy

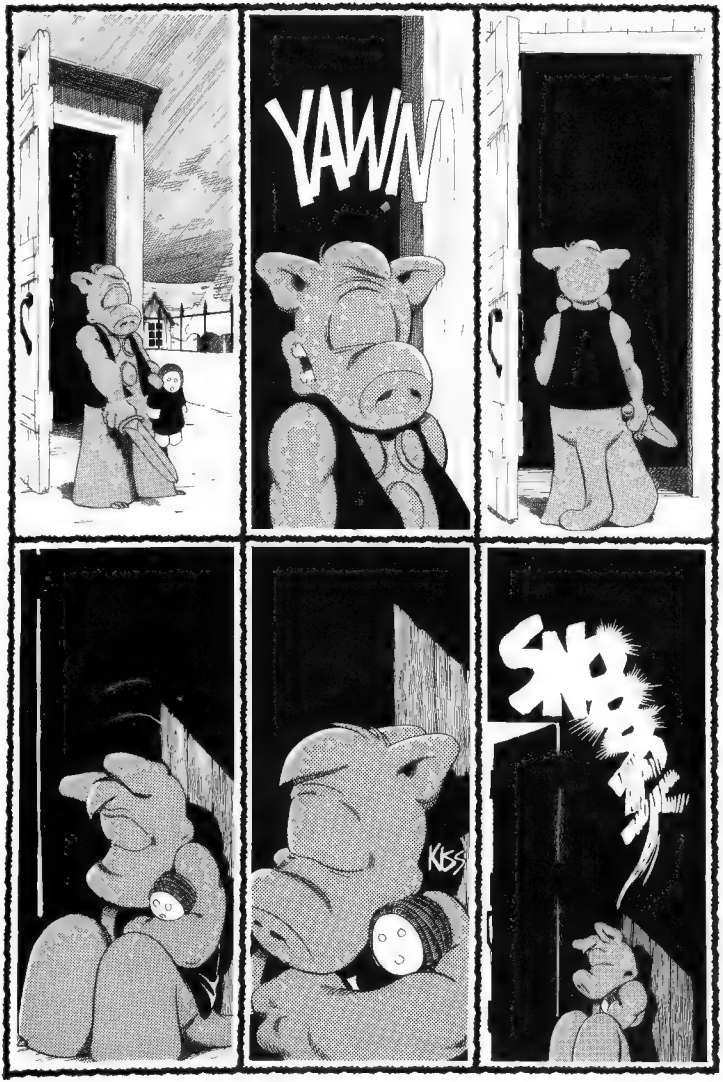
The Matriarchists are heedless of the fact that the Goddess is a Deity of All Womankind. While She is Mother, She is also Daughter. Though She has her bountiful aspect, She is also Virgin. She is both Seductress and Celibate. The Multiverse itself has issued forth from Her Womb; and yet She is untouched; inviolate. The Matriarchists invite disaster, courting, as they do, a single aspect of Her being. The Goddess is Mystery in All Things. If Cirin persists, single-mindedly, in pursuing a False Ascension, the fate which awaits her is the same fate that has befallen all who have stood before the Gate of Heaven.

Astoria
Kevillist Origins

Look, my sister...
Look.
MERCIFUL MOTHER OF US AWL..
F..GATE...
HANH2...


BELCH

TIK
TIK
TIK
TIK
CRAK
CRAK
TUK


YAWN
KISS
SNAP

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED

hadn't seen. That went very well. Then it was off to Killeen airport to pick up wee Colleen Doran, back to the hotel to get her checked in, off to find lunch (she was starving) and then out to Fort Hood, the largest military installation in what used to be called the Free World and which is now, simply, the World for an interview with Marilyn Phipps the editor of the *Fort Hood Sentinel* and a few publicity shots with Stephen Carlson, a Cerebus-Fan-In-Uniform (don't laugh, there's quite a few of them. Right, Jerry?). Colleen and Martin pitched in admirably on the subject of self-publishing. Then it was back to the hotel to get cleaned up for dinner at John's house. Shauna (Mrs. John) cooked up a great lasagna buffet dinner. Martin, John and I drank a more-than-respectable amount of Shiner Bock (Martin, you were right about that Texas beer) while Diana and Shauna finished off a bottle of White Zinfandel between them (Di swears by the stuff and now, so does Shauna). Then it was back to the hotel with Colleen and Martin deciding in advance to poop out on the early morning radio interview. Wimps. The next morning John, Di and yours truly headed over to KNCT Radio where John and I were interviewed by the very attractive, charming and delightful Alicia. Then it was back to the hotel for an early lunch (once Colleen and Martin had roused themselves. I let John call the rooms. People are cranky at that hour of the morning). And then it was signing time. We started at 1:00 p.m., signed until 5:30 (Alicia came by with a KNCT-TV film crew) and then stopped the signing for the CBLDF benefit auction which ran a little over FIVE HOURS and which raised a stunning total of $5,430 for the Fund. A very special thanks to all who contributed; DC, Valiant, Dark Horse, Roland Mann, Martin, Colleen, Tundra and J. O'Barr, Thomas Shuhling (who also provided security), Steve Hendricks (Cerebus Museum curator) and everyone else. Yoov mide a grown man croy. Seriously. We got out of there a little before midnight. Since the limo was coming to take us all to Houston at 8:30 a.m. I opted for sleep instead of food (Di and I pigged out on the chocolate-tree 'thank-you' gifts that Shauna gave all of us). Next morning, John, Di, Colleen, Martin and I rolled out for Houston, arriving around 12:30. Not having eaten since the day before, I pleaded with Bob Allen for a delay on the start time at *Bedrock City* by phone. He very graciously conceded and we all had a chance to stuff our faces before David and Greg came to guide the limo to *Bedrock City*. A great signing. I'd like to thank Rick Evans for all the hard work and elaborate preparation he and his staff put in. Really, an outstanding performance. I really do apologize to everyone who waited so long for us to show up. My old pal Tom Stazer *(Crazy Bob)* showed up and we had a chance to chat when I went out for a cigarette. Gene Phillips was there (see his two letters in Aardvark Comment this issue). They even had a box of romance comics for Di to paw through. I begged off on the apres signing dinner since I was very much at low ebb at that point. A quiet, surprisingly-good dinner under a basketball hoop (don't ask) with Di and that was it for Saturday.

The Con was small again, but we had our usual good turn-out right from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. And finally, the last guy was there in front of me with a copy of *Cerebus* 100 (the one with no signing room on the splash page). I flipped through to page 20 and signed it to him, "Best wishes — the last autograph of US Tour '92" and drew a big head-sketch of Cerebus shouting "YAY!" John and Shauna gave Ger and me and Di a ride to the airport. The trip home went off without a hitch.

Whew.

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

If we keep this going, Dave, we could collect it into a book. Maybe I could publish it with a little "i" logo on it.

Gary Groth
Kim Thompson
Fantagraphics Books

"publishers of the world's greatest cartoonists"

How perfectly charming. A Christmas card signed by both Gary *and* Kim, but written in the first person singular. It's true! My sources close to Gary's Ivory Tower inform me that he has composed a reply to "The Last Waltz" which will appear in the next issue of the *Comics Journal*. I've already begun work on "Let's Twist Again" which will appear in these pages the month following.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

First off, let me inquire as to whether the full text of your speech to the Diamond retailers has seen print in any accessible place. Apparently your version of what you said diverges so much from what Gary Groth says you said that what we have here is not just a failure to communicate, but an impasse, a Kirbyesque "Final Barrier" beyond which even the gods cannot penetrate.

I read your response to Groth with great interest. While I hadn't agreed with Groth on several points in his editorial, I had to pause when he quoted you saying, "As strange as it may sound, *Cerebus* is really all you've got . . ." Frankly, it did sound like a self-pandering statement, but I kept my opinion in reserve for two reasons, to wit: (1) Gary had only quoted an excerpt of the speech, and even the line I mentioned concluded with three dots, which could mean "voice trailing off," but also might mean "omission," and (2) one's words can take on an ambivalent cast in cold print, as we all learned when some fans (including me) misinterpreted your take on the Great Neal Adams-Jim Shooter Movie Contract Matter.

Now, in the "Last Waltz" editorial, you don't specifically address the question of being taken out of context by Groth's excerpting of your speech — but nonetheless, at one point in your editorial, you mentioned that your speech had favorably mentioned not only *Cerebus*, but *Usagi Yojimbo* and *Groo*, as works that kept their schedules. This, interestingly enough, Gary Groth did not see fit to mention; he only focused on how you allegedly came out on the side of Image Comics, thus telling the retailers what they wanted to hear. I can see how this discrepancy would have been a minor matter beside the more germane matter of Art vs. Commodity — but still, I was surprised.

Perhaps said surprise comes from my perspective on the *Journal's* history — not that that needs excessive detailing in the pages of Aardvark Comment, but, to make a long story short, people have been accusing the *Journal* of prejudice in their reporting of news for some time now, but nothing has really stuck. Now, a Gary Groth

editorial is not news per se — but if I see an editorial-writer build his case on a fact like a public figure's statements, then I want to see those statements treated with fidelity, just as if they were straight news. That is why I would like to see the full text of your remarks, Dave, because I feel that, if Groth left out text that applied to other works than *Cerebus* or Image productions, then he has finally transgressed the bounds that he used to follow quite scrupulously: the bounds of Good Journalism. Even in the context of an editorial, a Good Journalist does not just leave out points that might weaken his case; he mentions them and then attempts, with whatever success, to dismiss them. Anything else is, in J.M. Barrie's words, "bad form."

And my reasons of interest are not entirely historical. I consider you, Dave, what I term an "honest egotist." That is, you have enough ego to believe in what you do, and to talk about it whenever circumstances permit, in the interests of getting More Orders. This in itself is not "pandering" any more than the advertisements of any company (Fantagraphics included); everyone nurtures some sort of belief about what they do, whether or not they're fooling themselves or not. But I have generally found you to be "honest" about your "ego" (not derogatory in my sense), in that your public attitude has been, "This is my work; it's built out of my perspectives and experiences. You may like it or not, and I'll cordially argue with anyone who disagrees, but basically, I stick to what I say because it's from *my experience.*" Your last Journal interview carried this tone very well; a tone of acknowledging a certain relativism in anyone's tastes or beliefs. To my mind, this is preferable (assuming I've correctly interpreted your philosophical stance) to a "dishonest egotist," i.e., one who professes that his tastes and beliefs are not just rooted in his experience and perceptions, but in Standards of Truth That Can Be Proven Absolutely by Logic and Forensic Debate.

Additionally, while there are already many panderers in comics whose entire philosophy starts and ends with "Buy my books and make me rich," your record would suggest otherwise. Though you did not continue to publish comics as did Fantagraphics, you've continued to provide a format for "unusual stories" in back-ups to *Cerebus;* surely a tireless self-promoter would only publish "Tales of Vanaheim" or somesuch.

On other subjects: Though most of "Last Waltz" was adroitly written, (particularly the image of Gary, alone in his abattoir), I don't follow your point vis-a-vis Dark Horse's *Aliens.* Were you saying that, because it's essentially genre-work, it can't be considered an "alternative" to network TV, mainstream comics, and the like? If so — even if your proposed term "alternative comics" were applied to all the good stuff, from *Cerebus* and *Yummy Fur* to a work published by a large company, like *Sandman* — would *Aliens* and similar works all be simply "mainstream" comics? I'll grant that a retailer may want to know how to classify works by theme, so that he can recommend *Cerebus* to readers of *Sandman* and *Aliens* to readers of *X-Men.* But, as long as we're talking about retailers' wishes, I should think they would also want some way of denoting the economic base of each company they deal with. I assume this is how the division of Big Two/Independents came about, with "independents" meaning the same things it did to the film industry — "the guys with fewer resources and less money." Which is why I don't see the term "independents" dying out soon.

A last reference to Gary's editorial: why, in his eyes, would it be hypocritical for you to rail against the greed of corporate Marvel while serving your personal guests beluga caviar? I presume you bought the beluga with your own money; surely it's your business how you spend it. At worst it *might* be termed ostentation — but ostentation is hardly synonymous with greed.

Finally, in keeping with all the plugging in the recent letters-page and the rash of pandering in the industry at large (except, of course, for Fantagraphics), I'll mention that issues of my critical zine MYTHINKING #1 are still available for one thin buck, and #2 will probably be out early next year, also for an equally-thin buck.

And a parting comment on the Fearsome Fate of the Punish-eroach: "Aaawwwwwww . . ."

Gene Phillips
2750 Holly Hall #1105
Houston, TX
USA 77054

Always glad to welcome a *Comics Journalist* who has been cast down from the face of Fantagraphics heaven, particularly someone as lucid and eloquent as Mr. Phillips. When I was referring to the *Aliens* garbage from Dark Horse, I meant the current, brainless, "churn-'em-out" version. The first two black and white comics (as I recall) were quite brilliant. As was Walt Simonson's adaptation of the first film. I am printing the full text of the Address to the Diamond Comics Seminar in this issue. I'll let you be the judge as to whether Gary misrepresented my viewpoints.

As to your second letter . . .

★★★★★★★★★★

I've just finished *Comics Journal* #152 — the "mainstream" issue — and what follows are some of my reactions:

On the whole I'd say the issue is one of the most balanced Fantagraphics has published in years, at least in regard to content regarding the comics mainstream. There's almost a feeling of the critics' bending over backwards to be reasonably fair even with respect to their vaunted "higher standards," and the result is not just good criticism of the comics or creators involved, but also a greater clarification of those standards, some of which have been lost in the mud of rhetoric.

On McFarlane: much to my surprise, I didn't think he came off quite as badly as did others I talked to. There's no doubt that he embarrassed himself several times by his revelations of ignorance about the comics world, and by his constant flow of expletives (perhaps a sign of nervousness?) But in some ways, with his react-off-the-cuff approach to debate, he touched on some matters that more polite, better-informed proponents of the mainstream have not.

In the section coyly labeled, "Art? Whuzzat?", McFarlane puts his finger on the nub of what bothers many people about the *Journal* aesthetic; while Groth may aver that he is simply working to achieve "a pluralistic society that simply has more elevated tastes than they do now," many readers get what McFarlane got, "So now Gary Groth has become the dictator of what's to be in comic books." (Later, in the Moore interview, Groth and Moore

discuss, in what must be presumed a self-ironizing fashion, how much better comics would be if their tastes were shared by everyone). In response to McFarlane's point, Groth then stresses that his goal is to "educate" rather than "manipulate" — but of course, the two are not so easily separable. What is the essential difference between the Marvel advertiser who trumpets, "Marvel comics are the best thing since sliced kumquat," and the elitist critic who pontificates, "My standards are in the tradition of great literature; ipso facto, they are the best?" The latter may well feel that his books have the power to educate people to make their own choices, whereas the Marvel-rep's only goal is to get people to buy Marvel books. But still, there's a stridency in Groth's approach that bears watching: he may not internalize that everyone should read Fantagraphics books — he may agree that reading Kitchen Sink or Tundra's less generic efforts will serve the same overall "educative" purpose — but he is absolutely adamant in saying that genre works, whether Marvel's or anyone's, can only be bad. In short, just as the Marvel-rep would like to see readers stampede toward their latest crop of genre-works, Groth wants an equally-frenetic stampede away from such works. My own feeling is more qualified; I would like to see a stampede away from Marvel, not because it puts out genre, but because it puts out BAD genre. Of course, many critics believe that the words "good genre" would be an oxymoron — and for them, the *Journal* is a godsend. But here's where the *Journal's* attempts to "educate" begin to edge into "manipulation" — and that's when an avowed philosophy becomes a party line. To extend Darcy Sullivan's political metaphor, just as the '50's politicos of America and Russia took polarized viewpoints of, say, the values of capitalism — all good to America, all bad to Russia — we have similar distortions from both populist Marvel ("Superheroes can only be good") and elitist Fantagraphics ("Superheroes can only be bad.")

In none of the editorials or reviews of *Journal* #152 is it possible to expose any more intellectualized version of McFarlane's "let the cream rise to the top." Instead, the same song is always heard: "This stuff that the readers like should give way to other stuff—," which frankly doesn't sound all that damn pluralistic to me. I might disagree with McFarlane that everything that rises to the top is "the cream" — but I'd likewise differ with some of the names listed in Groth's editorial in #152 as "the best cartoonists." "Generally acknowledged throughout the world?" By whom? It can't be by either the foreign or domestic audiences, since "many" receive "bare subsistence wages." Presumably this is the verdict of the Critics — or, rather, the Critics Who Really Matter. "Most respected by their peers?" Groth must mean "peers in quality" — i.e., each other — rather than "peers in rank," since in #152 we learn of at least one pro who didn't know Dan Clowes from Adam. (And maybe if we looked really hard, we might find one or two other pros who know the oeuvres of all those on the list, and still don't consider them all "the best.")

The *Doom Patrol* review by Rich Kreiner is the issue's best example of what I've called the *Journal's* party line. I take no issue with either the praise or criticism Kreiner heaps on Grant Morrison. But throughout the review Kreiner insists that no matter what interesting permutations Morrison may wreak upon the super-hero genre, there will always be "something meatier" out there — presumably "nongenre" work — which the discriminating reader should seek. This viewpoint proves fascinating in regard to one of Kreiner's sins of omission: in citing several definitions of "post-modernism" in reference to Morrison's work, Kreiner quotes one of Linda Hutcheon's minor descriptions, but passes over he more all-inclusive definition: that postmodernism arose from a desire to critique the modernist aesthetic, with its "hermetic" approach to "true art," and its need to unilaterally privilege some forms of discourse over others. Like most *Journal* critics, Kreiner practices this sort of privileging with a vengeance. It's not good enough to say that many "nongenre" works are superior to many genre works; one must proclaim that all nongenre is superior to all genre. Or that all of the good ole rational modernist works are superior to all of these newfangled postmodernist works. Or that, Thoth help me, no commercial comic, be it *Doom Patrol*, the Fawcett *Captain Marvel*, or *Jingle-Jangle Tales*, can ever emulate any of the "subtle functions" of "fairy-tales" — except as mere "entertainment," whatever that is. (Kreiner does not prove that last statement; he merely says that "sober reflection" will "suggest" the verdict). I "suggest" that anti-genre privileging (or prejudice, to call a spade a spade) led to this foregone conclusion. I also suggest that such a conclusion is about as valuable to criticism as a creationist's conviction that he *will* find in prehistory evidence of God would be to real archaeology.

And, also on the "party line," though not as heavily, Darcy Sullivan propounds a largely-fair overview of Marvel history: as a small company Marvel was in tune with the "pop equinox" of the sixties; as a corporate entity Marvel became rulebound and stultified, with the result that the relatively-high quality of the "flagship titles" descended into "staleness." Yet, though I don't precisely desire to defend corporate Marvel, I believe that in his zeal to vilify the "greedy" institution that Marvel became, Sullivan overlooks a fundamental rule of all genre: company-owned or not, genre always gets old. Most savants familiar with the characters created, respectively, by Conan Doyle and Edgar Rice Burroughs — both of whom owned their characters all their lives — will agree that the best adventures of Holmes and Tarzan are the earliest. Why, if neither was owned by a company, did both characters decline from "good genre" to "so-so genre?" Because genre-work is formed around limited parameters, which both readers and author can enjoy until those possibilities are exhausted (at least by that author). I'm convinced that reader expectations, not diabolical corporations, are the reason why either a company or an independent author may suffer creative senescence. (For that matter, I'm not that sure nongenre authors are not just as vulnerable to it, but I'll pass on that for now).

But though I don't kid myself as to the deathless quality of any single generic creation, I do believe that some interesting talents flourish only within generic parameters — such as Jack Kirby, who reaps great praise whenever his name is mentioned in #152, but whose genius lies (as Northrop Frye said of Shakespeare) not in being "original" but in being "more profoundly imitative." I've often suspected that on the "dreams

worlds" envisioned by Groth (and perhaps Alan Moore as well, though it's hard to tell how serious Moore is about such things), the current inequity of market share — let's call it 90% for genre, 10% for nongenre — would simply be reversed; that is, replaced by a new inequity. In *my* perfect world, the market share would be strictly 50-50; half for excellent genre, half for excellent nongenre, with proponents of the bad stuff in either domain being hurled into the outer darkness. My "dream world" won't come to pass either — but it would be a damn sight more "pluralistic."

And, lastly, as for why I didn't send this letter to the *Journal*, I can't sum up my attitude better than to paraphrase what Evan Dorkin said of Marvel:

"I can't change the *Journal*. Who could?"

Gene Phillips
2750 Holly Hall #1105
Houston, TX
USA 77054

I think this is a pretty fair representation of where the *Comics Journal* falls down. Steve Bissette pointed out (when I discussed your letter with him) that Gary seems to have no real grasp of the distinction between genre and nongenre. Self-indulgent, whining autobiographical comics have become a genre unto themselves. There are at least a dozen issues of *Sandman* (and the story-line taken as a whole) that defy classification. I wondered aloud what exactly does the "Fanta" in Fantagraphics stand for?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave, my friend,

Having gotten my freebie of 164 in the mail today — this is three in a row that have arrived at the correct address! I was surprised to find myself and my comic book *Hepcats* the topic of much of the issue's conversation, both in Aardvark Comment and in the Note from the President. Since your editorial "The Last Waltz" looks as if it's going to generate a firestorm of lettercol discussion for several issues to come and since many of your correspondents are using *Hepcats* as an example of the archetypal Artistically Accomplished Struggling Independent Comic Book, I thought I would add my two bits to the coin toss, as well as elaborate upon many of the things mentioned regarding *Hepcats* specifically, for your readers' enlightenment and/or entertainment.

Yeah, the *Atomic Comics* signing was a puzzler Mike's a great guy, and the store isn't bad, but those customers . . . hmmm. Even after I put a moratorium on the super-hero sketches (a major mistake brought on by someone's over-hearing me mention I'd done a Hulk for someone at Killeen's *Paper Heroes* the preceding weekend and had perversely enjoyed myself), fans were just getting their *Cerebus* phonebooks signed and buggering off. Funny attitude, when you're sitting right there and they're not even looking. Fortunately, it seems to be quite rare. The con the following day at the hotel was awesome. Made more money in that six-hour period than I do at an entire Dallas Fantasy Fair, plus met some important new retailers with whom I'm now doing business directly. First among equals. Chuck Chapman of *B&T*, who also had a letter in 164, I see. He promptly placed a $100+ order and the books are evidently sailing out the door. Diamond's Phoenix warehouse, when they ordered *Hepcats* at all ordered pathetic numbers-single digit quantities, often! Now, through my recent phone sales, *B&T* alone is moving forty.

This illustrates a curious phenomenon I'm experiencing here in *Hepcats* land. In many ways, things are better, far better than they've ever been. After a period of really low circulation, the numbers on *Hepcats* 10, which will premiere at our Killeen mega-signing on the 11th (I can hardly wait — I'm looking forward to buying you and Ger some real Texas beer — none of this Coors or Miller gnatpiss — that's the beer equivalent of a Rob Liefeld comic), are up over 4000, in an era when small-press B&W comics, even from publishers like Kitchen Sink and Fantagraphics, are lucky to move 900–1500. Furthermore, *Hepcats* out of myriad small-press titles, is getting a disproportionate amount of media attention, in fact, it has since day one. Most recently, an interview in *Amazing Heroes* #204 (thanks, Jeff), Tom Palmer's swell write-up in-wonders never cease *Wizard* #16, and Harley Jebens' article in the new *Comics Scene*. When I flip through Previews and see all the tens of dozens of hundreds of small-press titles, which, like *Hepcats*, are no doubt done by guys my age working out of their apartments, and which never get any attention from any of the industry's magazines (even a two-line blurb in the "Oh-Yeah-This-Is-Also-Gonna-Be-Out-Sometime" section), I consider myself profoundly fortunate. Like, whoever came up with that corny, melodramatic old saw about feeling "sorry for myself because I had no shoes, until I met a man who had no feet."

In spite of all this, in many ways, things are no different than they've always been. For instance, no sooner do you score some big victory in the direct sales or good review department, than along comes someone — your distributors usually — to remind you that you're nothing more than a rock in their shoe. First, there was Capital's cute stunt, following our great turn at their trade show in May. Signed posters for hours, and what do I read in *Internal Correspondence?* "We'd like to extend our sincere thanks to Dave Sim for being such a gracious guest. He even signed autographs in the hotel lobby after the Exhibit Hall closed." I sat right next to you and did it too, but no mention is made. What burns me is the idea of all of the retailers who didn't attend who read that; they simply have no way of knowing, thanks to CCD, I was ever even there.

And then there was the arrogance of a single who-shall-remain-nameless Diamond employee, whom I was told got in trouble over it in dealing with *Hepcats* 9. True, the issue was late, which was my fault. (I could go on a tear about how the institutionalized ghettoization of B&W comics by comics distributors perpetuates low sales, which perpetuates scheduling lapses, for which you are treated like a war criminal despite the fact that they helped cause them with their low purchase orders, but you have other letters to print.) But here's this guy chewing my ass out over the phone, and I'm saying, look, I want to cooperate with you. I wouldn't even bring this up if the books weren't *at the printer right now*, so why not take them returnable, as Capital was perfectly happy to do? Oops, wrong thing to say! "We're NOT Capital!" he barks back. And then he says, "Why should Diamond make an exception for you?" and I'm thinking. Well, you'd make an exception if my book had an Image logo on it, man! But I don't actually say that, because that is

not professional phone conduct. Proper business etiquette, however, did not stop him from using profanity at least once, as I recall, before hanging up on me in mid-sentence.

So hopefully your readers — many of whom are my readers as well — can see what it is I'm up against. Here it is December, and numerous Diamond accounts are going to be getting a book that came out in June for the first time! It will be interesting to see, too, how those fans react to seeing *Hepcats* 9 for the first time and discovering it is a second printing, since the first printing was sold out by myself over the telephone to lots of those wonderful retailers we met at the summer trade shows. If the distributors don't like my doing that, that's their problem. I personally don't feel like sitting on my butt letting Diamond decide whether or not I should be allowed to have a roof over my head and food in my belly. And, if the result of all of these telephone sales is what it has been — a sharp increase in circulation — so much the better.

After all, don't you agree that it is significant that the major retail chains of this industry — *Moondog's, Comics and Comix* as well as other strong and dedicated stores — *The Beguiling, Comix Experience, B&T, Seely and Kane's Black Dragon,* and dozens I'm forgetting have chosen to bypass the distributors, order *Hepcats* directly from Double Diamond Press, and in so doing promote the book more successfully and boost their numbers? Does this say something about the system? I think so. It could be that my distributors — whom I'll never blow off; I'm stubborn but not crazy — will someday only be supplying those stores who order two or three copies of *Hepcats* for subscribers, while the real contenders, who are moving 40, 50, 100 copies an issue out the door, will be going through me. If it doesn't go that way, that's fine, but if it does, I'm prepared to handle it. I have to be. This isn't art. This is survival. And I'm doing better than most. Madness.

Fans are the real power. Literally, and all of you out there reading this ought to note that with a few dollar bills, fans *en masse* can turn the system around and keep the things they like to read not only alive, but alive and kicking. What I have noticed is that most fans feel helpless. They walk in to their comic shops, hear the owner say, "Hell, I ain't seen one in months," shrug, and walk out. Oh well, there went another of my favorite books. Why won't something come out that I like, and stay in business? Most fans do seem to feel entirely at the mercy of the system. Forever I am getting letters. "Hey, I just saw *Hepcats* 9! Man, I though you died after number three!" Fans need to realize that they are why the system exists, and that they can, if they want to, make any comic they want to read thrive and thrive. But they have to do it all together, five, ten guys won't make a difference, but hundreds can. At the risk of sounding like Jerry Brown here in blunt terms is what I mean:

If each of the 20,000+ people reading this issue of *Cerebus* sent Double Diamond Press $3.25 ppd. for a sample copy of *Hepcats*, that would mean, in almost an instant, at least a $65,000 windfall for my book. In Marvel terms, that's of no consequence. For a self-publisher like me, it would be almost identical to what happened with Aardvark-Vanaheim when *High Society* was first released via mail-order only. Here's the domino effect resulting from 20,000 people writing measly $3.25 checks: immediate elimination of all debts, plus financial security for at least the next 20–25 issues, which, being produced without my having to spend days on the phone placing countless long distance calls (wonder why it takes so long to get an issue out? There's your answer.), would be published at a bi-monthly as opposed to bi-annual rate. This increased frequency would then be noted by retailers and distributors, which would cause sales in that arena to flourish as well, And so on. Final result: *Hepcats* reaches its goal of 100 issues in comfort, as opposed to each issue being a Tantalus climb. Its creator, perhaps, finds himself in a good enough position one year down the road to take an aspiring young artist, and help the kid out; the way, once upon a time, his favorite Canadian cartoonist helped him.

Some cynical types are probably sneering at what they might be interpreting as a sleazy free ad on my part. You'd be missing the point. It doesn't have to be *Hepcats* you help — maybe it isn't your cup of Chateau Dhersion. Pick your own favorite: *StarChild, Bone, A Distant Soil.* I'm certain neither Jeff nor James nor Colleen would mind the help. The point is that with tiny individual sacrifice, fans, when grouped in the thousands, can turn a comic's (and its artist's) entire *career* around! It has kept, for instance, Fantagraphics going despite their low purchase orders and the acute clinical depression of its co-owner. Their annual catalog is an expensive production, but it results in such massive mail-order revenue that it keeps the company solvent. In the case of *Bone, StarChild* or *Hepcats*, big $50+ orders like they receive aren't even necessary. A teeny $3.25 order from 20-, 30-, 35,000 fans — heck, do your own math. forget speculation — this sort of thing is what you'd call a real investment.

Fans feel helpless, when in fact, fans could and should be in control. After all, all that creators — whether self-published or not — want to do is satisfy ourselves as artists and entertain you into the bargain. And then, well, maybe we wouldn't spend so much time bitching in lettercols and editorials about how oppressive the comic book market is towards Comics We Like. Maybe people wouldn't ask me or Colleen or any artist "When's issue so-and-so coming out?" because they'd *know*. And maybe Gary Groth would write a happy, cheerful editorial full of pithy homilies, beaming platitudes, and pink bunny rabbits.

And guys like me would love you readers even more.

Ah, well. Back to the drawing board. Got a new issue to start.

Yours,

Martin Wagner
Publisher, Double Diamond Press
9300 Northgate Blvd., #116
Austin, TX
USA 78758-6105

Obviously, with *Cerebus'* larger circulation (and six 'phone books' that are perennial good sellers), I have the luxury of dealing almost exclusively with the distribution network as constituted. This is definitely not a luxury that is afforded the small self-publisher; without direct sales to fans, subscriptions and sales to a core group of interested stores, self-publishing is virtually impossible in the nineties (and even then it is nearly impossible). I *do* advocate that the distributors be offered everything that is offered direct to fans and stores (yes, it was a mistake to sell the phone books exclusively by phone and mail order once we had financial

security), but, realistically, there is very little that they can do for a single title of which they order only a few hundred copies. Capital and Diamond are mammoth corporations and their success, consequently, depends on moving mammoth quantities of material. I suspect that they (and any comic store which uses cycle sheets) are starting to realize that Marvel Comics not only isn't the reliable core of their business that it once was, but is now, in fact, the greatest source of trouble to them. I anticipate large changes in ordering patterns at all levels of the direct market when the Marvel "landfill" inhabiting the back of every *(every)* comic book store shows up as inventory at tax-time. I know of one chain that grosses millions that will have an after-tax profit of 1400 dollars for 1992 because of the Marvel Landfill Crisis.

★★★★★★★★★★

Hello Dave;

I am writing this letter because I am morbidly depressed and I know that, unlike my 'friends' who have not written me back, since my last letters to them, you a complete and total stranger will write me back. Funny how that works.

I am also sending some money for a few issues that I have somehow missed during my move from 'hell hole' Grande Prairie Alberta to Victoria British Columbia. I really do not care how I missed them, (stupid damn distributors) but I would really like to have #155, 156, 157 and 162 (missing because it was given to someone whom I love very much and is not returning my calls — also why I am depressed).

Now, I have just read issue 164 and it made my day. No my life is not usually this pathetic but I am glad that when it is, I can sit down and absorb an excellent piece of work, like *Cerebus.* Furthermore the parody of *Sandman* within reminded me of a conversation that I had with a friend of mine Annie a few days ago. We were just talking about what each of us was going to do with our lives and Annie brought up the idea that she would really like to seek out Neil Gaiman and have a few pints with him (good long range goals, but it's great fun to talk about). I agreed but figured hey why limit yourself. So I brought up the idea that we should go to Ontario and seek out Neil Gaiman and Dave Sim, get them together, and buy them a few pints. She asked me, "Who is Dave Sim?" I was abashed, so I tried the word *Cerebus,* still no comprehension. Oh well, I guess now is the time to lend her my entire collection and get her hooked on the earth pig. Except my entire collection is still in Grande Prairie with the rest of my comics, clothes and music collection and I do not want it sent up because I like moving around a lot and want to be capable of packing all of my belongings into 5 large suitcases. So I am settling on buying her *Jaka's Story* for Yule. Anyways, so how about it. If I or we happened to be in your city some day could you be bothered to be bought a few pints and be involved in a conversation on anything except *Cerebus,* or comics at all, possibly with Neil Gaiman. Oh well, probably not, although I do not see why, because if someone wanted to buy me a couple of pints and talk I would probably at least agree to meet him or her.

Finally I would like to address my concern for the letters column. It is my belief that the letter column was far better, when you were absent from it. This is not meant to be a comment on your letter writing abilities, (which are quite good) just a statement of opinion. I believe that this is because, when you stopped answering the letters, within the column, people stopped only writing specifically to you, instead many of your readers wrote of themselves, for themselves and for the other readers (unless it has only been your selection of letters that has changed, in which case the entire following argument is a moot point). It became more like one huge classroom with the instructor absent and the students (readers) communicating to one another, sharing life experiences and discussing human nature (albeit with a long pause before receiving a response). Where are the discussions on masturbation, rape, pregnancy and each persons' life or despair of existence? They seem to have all but disappeared. Replaced by various personal letters to Dave Sim. Dave Sim I missed the tour, when are you coming back? Dave Sim how do I promote alternative comics? et all. It is almost as if the instructor of one huge classroom has walked back into the classroom and all of the attention is now on him instead of everyone around. The readers are afraid to give themselves or their life experience, because they are afraid of a response, afraid that Dave Sim is going to give them a rebuttal in front of their peers (other *Cerebus* fans) and make them feel or look bad. A response from Dave Sim on any subject makes further response (especially dissent) by the readers more difficult and less likely. Whereas a response from another reader, even if the opinion is the same as your unwritten opinion, simply incites further more in depth responses. The worst part of this, though is that the emotional depth that existed previously was the first thing to disappear, because emotions are most vulnerable to criticism. So the letter page has lost its uniqueness and taken on an intellectual level entirely, with severe fan person tendencies. Maybe you want this, but somehow even a more intellectual, or less emotional and more rational, column has severe drawbacks. The problem with any intellectual discussion is that by nature it lacks human experience. Emotions are real and something to grasp on to as our humanity. Ideas and opinions by contrast can never be right. No matter what you believe in it is not the *truth,* there are no truths only levels of falsity (by my own reasoning this very statement must therefore be false, but I am ignoring simple logic because using it tends to get us further away from human reality). For example, it is my opinion that anyone should be allowed to do whatever they want to do with their own bodies as long as they do not hurt others. See the problem with this is that everything you do hurts others. If you die, other people will hurt; if you become a junkie and live on the street, society hurts because it must now support one more junkie. Everything has consequences that are both good and bad, so no longer can the ideal exist, only levels of wrong. So Dave stop answering the letters, for me, because I want the emotions back. I really enjoy looking into other peoples lives without having to be part of their story.

Sincerely,

Clifton Bauman
#101-105 Gorge Road East
Victoria, British Columbia
V9A 6Z3

★★★★★★★★★★

Hey Dave!

Thanks for wanting to come to *Heroes Convention '93.* The dates are June 11–13, 1993. It will be held at The Charlotte International Trade Center, located at 200 North College St., Charlotte, NC 28202. The host hotel is Holiday Inn, Center City at 220 N. College Street, telephone 1-704-335-5400.

Sorry I didn't get back to you sooner, but I moved the office/warehouse the last week in October and we killed Superman last week. I've never seen so much media on a comic book story. I've really been swamped.

H. Shelton Drum
Heroes Aren't Hard To Find
America's Comics Source
P.O. Box 9181
Charlotte, NC
USA 28299

I don't know if I'm going to get a list of appearances together for this issue, but this is a good chance to plug *Heroes Con* again on the letters page. See you in Charlotte June 11–13, y'all.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Today, I went to a meeting with the people of the magazine I write for during my time off; SCARCE (did I send you a copy?). As I was talking (as usual) other persons into trying to read *Cerebus,* one of the guys there said: "Hey, Olivier, I received *Cerebus* 162 today, and in Aardvark Comment, Dave Sim says he has lost your address and he wishes to contact you!". What a surprise! I confess I do not always read all of Aardvark Comment. I went back home but could not find issue 162. (Well, I know it's there, but I don't remember in what pile; I've been very messy these days.) So, I'm writing to say "Hello, I'm alive and well, here is my address". In fact, as I told you over the phone a few months ago, I was expecting a sign from you to go on with the project. I thought we would get in touch again once the US Tour is finished because I know it must have been pretty demanding and exhausting.

Anyway, now you have my address.

I find the idea of the "End of the US Tour" Party very nice. I was wondering whether I would attend, you know; flying over just for it. But the more I think about it, the more it seems like a little too crazy. Oh well, I'll decide just two days before, I think.

The interview we did in Kitchener is scheduled to be published at the beginning of '93.

Tell me (the easiest way to contact me is through fax and mail) what are your plans about our project. I will send you soon the thinking I've done about it, so that we can follow up on it.

Sorry to have been out of touch for a while. Talk to you soon.

Olivier Thierry
9 rue Dupleix
75015 Paris
France

At last! Olivier (in case you've forgotten) is the supervisor of the proposed French translation of *Cerebus.* I would urge anyone interested in participating to contact M. Thierry. Merci.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave Sim,

Hello. Hope you are well. I've enclosed photographs of two Cerebus figures which I recently modelled and cast by myself at home. Orignally made in clay, the models were used to produce moulds from which I am able to cast innumerable copies. (Pope Cerebus measures approximately 11cm.)

I took the Most Holy figure into AKA, Glasgow, and asked for their opinions regarding any possible interest from customers. The guys seemed to think there was demand for such an item and they would gladly stock said figure if it was official. They suggested a more appropriate finish, i.e. a correctly painted figurine as opposed to the 'antiqued' effect shown in the photos.

Dave, I'd appreciate it if you would look at the photos and tell me what you think. If you believe that the Cerebus figures could be sold, and if you will permit me to sell them to the appropriate retailers, then please get in touch with details and conditions.

These works were born in admiration and familiarity with the *Cerebus* book. The possibility of financial gain was secondary, although to this poor graphics student the chance of earning a few pounds is lovely indeed.

Anyway.

With much respect for the book and wishing you all the best,

David Aitchison

50 Glen Arroch,
St. Leonards,
East Kilbride,
Glasgow
G74 2BP

As a centerpiece of *Cerebus Campaign '93,* I am authorizing comic book stores to display and sell Cerebus merchandise produced by local fans without prior notification or royalty payments. Yours is a perfect example. So long as you are only selling your *Cerebus* "wares" in comic book stores, you have my whole-hearted approval. I would ask that you keep the items reasonably-priced (i.e. if it costs you two dollars to produce a figure, including labour, you should be able to sell them for under ten dollars, shouldn't you? Three dollars for you and three dollars for the store in question) and that you put "copyright Dave Sim" on it somewhere. This applies to t-shirts, buttons, pins, hand-towels, stuffed toys; the whole gamut. If you are going to solicit the distributors for them, then we have to go through a whole approval/authorization/licensing thing, but if it's just you and a local store making a few dollars (or pounds), making *Cerebus* fans happy, happy (joy, joy) and promoting the book, it's exactly the kind of grass-roots program we're developing for 1993. Go nuts.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

It's been brought to my attention that on your next Canadian tour, you plan to stop in Saskatoon in order to appease your many Saskatchewan fans. I think that instead, in order to properly atone for your slight, next summer you should do a Saskatchewan tour.

That way you could also meet your throngs of fans in Regina, Yorkton, and Moose Jaw. You could also hit Eyebrow and Elbow. You could do both Battleford and North Battleford in one day. You could visit Melville and/or Melfort (I can never remember which is which), and Wadena (home of Pamela Wallin). You could charter the Concord to fly up to Uranium City. If you timed it right your could even hit Estin during the Gopher Derby. And, of course, no tour of Saskatchewan would be complete without a trip to Pinkie.

Besides, Saskatchewan is the only place in the world where they

know how to make pizza.

Strawberry Jam Forever,

Paul Stockton
5334 Yonge Street,
Suite 120
Willowdale, Ontario M2N 6M2

You forgot the childhood home of the Right Honourable John Diefenbaker. I'd have to make a pilgrimage to the home of the only Western leader JFK could not abide.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave —

I had every intention of sending you a photograph of Nicole (even went so far as to garner her long-distance and hard-won permission) at her most Jaka-esque and demand that you let the *readers* decide. Then I figured — Hell — *you* draw her — *you* put words in her mouth — you've met both Nicole *and* the woman on whom you'd based the character. If you say Nicole doesn't look like Jaka, I believe you.

Actually, that realization came after I began seeing her in Joe Matt's Trish. Both physically and in personality. So I figure it's probably just me.

So anyway, Nicole's saved up to attend a friend's wedding in Senegal over the upcoming holidays and will return to this continent through New York the weekend of your party.

More deferred intentions.

At first I'd planned to hitchhike to Kitchener, then I thought to take that unregistered shitbox of a car Larry sold me before he moved West as far as it would carry me, then hitch the rest of the way. (It's been too long since I've had any sort of Honest to Jack roadtrip adventure, and your little soire was just the ticket punch I needed to scratch that hollow itch)

Then Nicole tells me that's when she'll be in NYC and asked if I'd like to come down and play. Oddly enough, it was a real toss up for a while, but I haven't seen her in a year.

And I really do love her, Dave.

We'll raise a glass to you and your guests before getting down to the business of tearing the town apart.

Rob Lavender
Boston

Hey. Knock yourselves out, kids. Did you know Gary Groth is pursuing the possibility of an interview with Trish where she tells *her* side of Joe Matt's stories? A special "Autobiographical Comics" issue of the *Comics Journal.* Deplorably shallow of me, to be sure, but I'm looking forward to it.

★★★★★★★★★★

Yo, Dave!

(Sorry 'about the hand writing but roommate's printer is thoroughly deceased.) Lately I've been batching *Cerebi* (or is that *Cerebo?* Greek or Latin?) in chunks of four or so, so last night I got around to reading "Last Waltz" as well as the responses to it in #164, and I gotta say that your comments on the importance of sticking to a schedule seem seriously wrong headed to me.

You have been at the forefront of those trying to promote comics as a valid and serious art form, and have, if memory serves, on more than one occasion decried the use of the word "product" to describe what creators do. Yet rigidly conforming to an arbitrary schedule seem much more suited to "product" than "art". I mean, would you rather have an issue of, say, *Bone,* (thanks a lot for the *Bone* preview! That might sound sarcastic, but it's not. Both *Bone* and *Hate* recently got me to violate my I-will-not-buy-back-issues credo. Of course there weren't that many of either . . .) that Jeff Smith wasn't into doing and didn't put his heart into, or not issue of *Bone* for a while, then a better one?

I know from personal experience that deadline pressure can often inspire good work, but my personal experience allows suggest that I go through dry-spells where everything I try to write is crap. Assuming my experience is not unique, how should similarly afflicted creators deal with it? Certainly, it's a mistake to solicit orders for a book that won't be ready, but what's wrong with soliciting orders when the book is ready to go to press, be it every month, or every 2 to 8 months?

Here are two things I've wondered about *Cerebus* for years. Was Tarim/Terim an editorial error before it was an ideological split? And the first time you told someone that *Cerebus* was a 300 issue mini-series, were you joking? (Actually, I guess those are both ways of asking was *Cerebus* just a Conan parody in the early days, and if so, when did it become serious?)

There haven't been too many Favorite Band lists in Aardvark Comment recently, so here are a few of mine: The Fall, Robyn Hitchcock, Soul Asylum, Miles Davis quintet w/ John Coltrane, the Thelonious Monk Octet of '57-58, The Academy of St. Martin in-the-Fields under the direction of Sir Neville Marriner, the Praque Chamber Orchestra under Charles Makesass, Musica Antiqua Köln, John Zoru's Naked City. The High-Back Chairs, Matt, in England, should check his facts before he vents his spleen.

Reading #164, I came to the conclusion that the topical comics parodies are the weakest thing in *Cerebus,* partly because of their transience (will anyone remember Lobo in ten years?) partly because they're very exclusive of non-super-hero comics readers. They also impair my efforts to get non-*Cerebus* readers to become *Cerebus* readers (most of the people I try to turn on to *Cerebus* are non-comics readers as well). I'm not saying you should stop them — in the first place that's not my perogative, and in the second place I think they're frequently hilarious — but they are in-jokes, and by nature in-jokes are exclusive. (To be fair, another impediment to converting folks, that is, is far more central: "The main character is a *what!?*" they say.) Hell, I wouldn't know who Lobo was if Robert Sheckley's name hadn't been prominently featured on the reprint volume. I hope this doesn't put me in the category of Groth-like obliviousness. When I spot something flying off the racks like *Lobo* does, I generally assume it's crap. Since reading Sheckley's endorsement, I've tried a couple issues of *Lobo,* and I am very ambivalent — it makes me laugh sometimes but I feel unclean afterward. But hey! at least I know who Sandman is — he's some pissant bank robber type that the Thing used to beat up on, right? (Incidentally, I'd never seen a Marx Brothers movie till this past summer (what can I say — I was raised in a cave) but that never stopped Lord Julius from cracking me up.)

Sincerely,

Doug Mayo-Wells
9008 Fairview Road
Silver Spring, MD
USA 20910

1) **I am identifying a condition that exists in the direct market that any retailer can tell you is virtually inescapable; there is a core audience for any book that can be added to and maintained. If a book is chronically late or the issues come out a year and a half apart (particularly with continued stories), sales will go down on the book and people will lose interest. In a perfect world, people should be lined up around the block waiting for the next issue of a good comic book. In the real world that doesn't happen.**

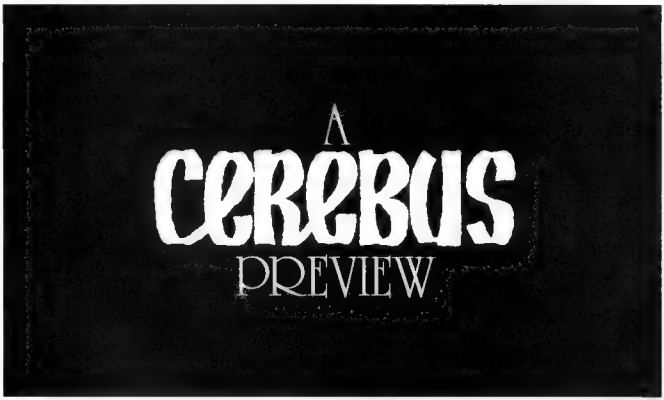
2) **After you have finished an issue of a comic book, you could do a better job if you redrew it starting at page one because of what you learned while doing it. Theoretically you could redraw the same comic book for ten years and end up with a perfect comic book but you're not going to earn a living that way.**

3) **Every creator does work that he isn't happy with. You can't be at your peak 365 days a year. Ger's and my credo is that if you didn't like the page you just did you try harder on the next one. First you get good, then you get fast, then you get good and fast. Burn-out, I think, is a myth. You go through dry-spells. You work hard, you are disciplined and ultimately you should be able to produce at a high enough efficiency on a day-in day-out basis (drawing quality, composition, execution and finish) so that when the quality slips (as it is going to, people being human and all) it is still at a high enough percentage of your peak efficiency that it doesn't, obviously and self-evidently, stink on ice.**

4) **You can solicit whenever you like, but if you wait 'til the book is done to do so, you have three months until you get your orders and another month until you get paid. Not very practical.**

5) **Tarim/Terim was not an editorial error. *Cerebus* was intended as a 156 issue . . . I believe maxi-series is the term . . . after issue 11. That was switched to 300 issues when I went monthly after issue 15.**

6) **People either like *Cerebus* or they don't. Super-hero parodies in a comic book that is sold exclusively in comic book stores doesn't really strike me as an "in-joke". Just makes me view the rest of the world as uninformed.**



Immediately following the Diamond Speech, you will find "Don't You Want Me?" a six-pager that walked in the door sometime last year (or the year before). I think I read it about fifty times before I even wrote back to the lads (Lee Carey and Desmond Lagan) and told them of my ambivalence. At first I thought it had a weak ending, but now I think the ending suits it admirably. They can be reached at 6, Suffolk House, Brixton, London, England. I'll leave it up to each of you to decide if the story has what it takes.

the street is charging; some at twice what the guy down the street is charging. What is extraordinary about this is the autonomy you have in choosing your own price. Each person who owns a store controls reality in that store. You don't have to phone head office to ask how much to charge for *Alpha Flight* 106, you don't receive instructions to raise or lower your price from some distant authority. There is no Securities and Exchange Commission for back issue comic book sales. It's a good thing, too, because a lot of you would be behind bars right now. For all practical purposes, your stores each function as a comic book stock exchange. There are as many stock exchanges as there are comic store owners. Some of you have *Cerebus* shares which are trading at twenty-five cents in a back-issue assortment bin. Another store, another stock exchange will have that book on the wall, sealed in plastic, along-side other blue chip investments for eight or ten dollars. 60,000 copies of *Free Cerebus* shipped in February of this year, representing a three-to-one ratio of copies in existence to the number of *Cerebus* fans; a market of 20,000 people chasing 60,000 copies. Larry Marder informs me that there are stores in Chicago selling *Free Cerebus* for six dollars. Supply and demand does *not* apply in the comic book marketplace. Supply and *desire* does. You want it, it's six bucks. You don't want it, someone else will give me the six bucks. If you can get it for three bucks down the street, get it for three bucks down the street. If they are a *Cerebus* fan/collector/investor and it is the only copy they've ever seen, the odds are they will pay the six bucks. Desire overcomes reason.

Viewed one way; the way that causes most of you to be embarrassed by this side of your business, this is grasping, swinish, piggy capitalism. Viewed another way, the way I see it, it represents business confidence, optimism in our future, a tangible manifestation in hard currency of a belief in ourselves and what we, comic book creators, publishers, distributors, warehouse personnel, retailers, fan, collectors, readers and investors have built from nothing into a one hundred million dollar a year industry in less than three decades.

Will *Alpha Flight* 106 be selling for one hundred dollars in a year's time? Fifty dollars? Five dollars? That's not important. What *is* important is that a comic book you paid less than a dollar for is able to bring you a sale of five dollars or eight dollars or ten dollars less than six months after publication. That is a stock market which makes the Dow Jones on its most bullish days look like a timid spinster with her life's savings stashed in her sock drawer. That money helps pay your rent, it puts food on your table, and, over the long term it lets you expand, it lets you grow, it lets you modernize and it gives you more money to invest.

Now, before I talk to you about investment, I'd like to share a few observations I have been able to make over the past five months of traveling around the Great Republic and seeing the direct market environment, both wholesale and retail, up close, live and in person. Put very simply, comics is a *now* environment. We've been moving toward that situation over the last two years and here we now find ourselves. As you sit here today, you have Thursday on your mind; *last* Thursday's shipment, which can be broken down into What Came In, What Should've Come In, What Finally Came In, What Partly Came In, What Came In and Left, Thank God, Over the Weekend and What Came In, Hasn't Budged in Three Days and has Quarter Pile Written All Over It in Neon Letters. You also have *next* Thursday on your mind. The ship week that you made all your decisions on two months ago *Four days from now, that Thursday will be Now.* It will be followed by a weekend where you will barely make ends meet or where you will come up a little short. Or it will be a weekend where you will have a little gravy left after the meat and potatoes are gone. Or it might be a week when you'll have a whole gravy boat full of gravy for yourself. You also have a Thursday in August on your mind and you're playing the same guessing game with that one. Week-in and week-out, month-in and month-out, year-in and year-out, the same guessing game. You learn from your mistakes, you listen to your gut (or, in some cases, you listen to your ulcer) and you play that guessing games where it is always Now and it is always Two Months From Now.

Reorders don't exist.

It's time for us all to be quite honest about that.

Reorders don't exist or they exist in such minuscule quantities that they might as well *not* exist. You could use another 50 of this title or another 20 of that title. Too bad. *Because-in-a-Now-Environment, Now-is-Now-and-last-week-might-as-well-be-five-years-ago.* Bump your orders on the title for two months from now and cross your fingers that the team who did issue one will still be doing it at issue five.

Now. And two months from now. A guessing game of hits and misses. And as the volume of material increases, the sheer number of first issues and new companies and new lines and new merchandise, we are moving into a junk bond phase in your stock exchange. In a traditional marketplace dictated to by supply and demand and government regulation, this would be a disaster. In *your* stock exchanges, it just means there is more pressure to order conservatively, to sell out in a shorter period of time; to keep inventory under control and, if possible, to eliminate inventory completely. It is a movement towards Now as an Absolute. If seventy-five per cent of your order is gone by the weekend, it's a Hit. If you still have seventy-five per cent of your order by next Thursday, it's a Dog. it's a Stiff. Just as there is no regulation on what you can charge for back issues, there is no regulation on the amount of new material being produced and solicited; and that production is increasing exponentially from *Marvel* and *DC* down to the kid in his basement who saved up enough money from his paper route to pay a printing bill. Where twenty-five per cent of the material consisted of number one's five years ago. today, Now and Two Months From Now, that percentage is increasing, also, exponentially. At the rate we are going, two years from now, no company will produce a second issue of anything and we will have reached a state of Absolute Now where everything is a guessing game, and nothing endures. You can already see it in the proliferation of mini-series and the shortening of those mini-series to a point where you are having to order a complete story, sight unseen.

At that point we will have passed from the junk bond phase into the lottery ticket phase. One out of every hundred comic books you will purchase will be listed as having a value of twenty-five dollars the following month in *Wizard* and *Comics Values Monthly.* But the twenty-five dollar hit won't stretch far enough to cover the inventory you are carrying of the 99 misses. But the game still won't end. Comic book companies will come and go in a matter of months or weeks instead of years; only to be replaced, hydra-like, by two more comic book companies, each soliciting 10 number one issues. Your stores will be expanding, the volume of material you carry will expand, everything will be going faster and faster and faster, but, then, rivers speed up considerably when they're heading for the waterfall.

Contrary to popular belief, not everyone lost

their fortune on junk bonds. The people who recognized them for the lunatic guessing game that they were; who saw how drastically over-valued they were, got into the junk bond market as it was rising faster and faster, sold them when they reached a fever pitch, and used the profits to buy long-term, solid, blue chip investments; that weren't as flashy; that weren't as exciting; but which had one indisputable trait which the junk bonds lacked; dependability in the long term.

There is nothing wrong with lottery tickets for that matter, as long as it's the *right* lottery ticket that you invest in.

Which brings me, as I promised a few months ago, to the subject of investment. Investment not in the Absolute Now, not in Two Months from Now, not in six months from now or a year from now or two years from now, but in long-term, dependable, productive investment. Because there is one major drawback to a Now environment that is growing exponentially and that is, that by its very nature, it inhibits, impedes and ultimately destroys any possibility of long-term growth and investment. This is particularly true in the case of the comic book environment and industry; because what your stores, what the environment and what the industry is based on is creativity; writers and artists who are, like you, human beings. When I began *Cerebus* in 1977, the total orders for the first issue came to 2000 copies; 500 copies purchased by Jim Friel, 500 copies by Harry Kremer and 1000 copies by Phil Seuling. That first issue showed a profit of about one hundred and fifty dollars. Issues #2 through #5 sold an identical amount to the same three individuals. Each, again, earned a profit of about one hundred and fifty dollars. By selling copies individually at comic book conventions, selling the original artwork for twenty dollars a page, selling convention sketches and doing advertising work in the month where I wasn't drawing *Cerebus*, I was able to keep going. Today with the ordering policies that are nearly universal; where you order your highest numbers on a number one issue and then cut your orders very dramatically on each successive issue, I am reasonably certain, that had I started *Cerebus* today, it would not have lasted past Thanksgiving of this year.

I am not saying that you should order every self-published black and white comic book that comes out because one day it will turn into the next *Cerebus*. I want only to make you aware that whether a book is published by *Marvel* or published by that kid who save up the money from his paper route, it has been written and drawn and lettered by a human being or by a team of human beings.

There is no question that the single largest anchor that is holding the direct market back from fulfilling its nearly limitless potential is the unreliability of the creators to produce their work on time and to meet their commitment to a publishing schedule. It is one of the biggest reasons I decided to do *Cerebus* in the first place. Every small publisher I worked for spent more time talking about what they were *going* to do than they did doing it. I decided that I would produce three issues of a comic book. I would keep the format the same, I would keep the title character the same, I would keep the approach the same and I would do it as I thought it should be done. But, most importantly, I was going to make sure it came out when I said it was going to come out.

There is no reason for any comic book to be off schedule; there are only excuses.

And excuses don't pay your bills and excuses don't help us to move forward as an environment and an industry. Time and time again, I tell creators, whether they are self-publishing or being published by someone else, that if they can't establish a schedule and stick to it, they are no longer part of the solution, *they-are-the-problem.*

In their defense, I will say, again, that they are human beings.

And I will ask you to picture what the effect is on a human being who is idealistic, who is enthusiastic, who is delivering his work on time, and who is pouring his heart, his blood, his sweat and his many, many tears into a creative endeavor, to see the orders for his first issue come in at, say, 5000 copies. On number three and they are 800 copies. His spirit is broken and, humiliated, depressed and embarrassed, he crawls away to lick his wounds.

People ask me what happened to *Big Numbers* number three.

That's what happened to *Big Numbers* number three.

It is more complicated than that, of course, and much of it has to do with Alan Moore and Bill Sienkiewicz as human beings and parts of their lives which have no place in a talk of this kind. But I can tell you that the central reason, and the reason you were the biggest part of, was the massive drop in orders between number one and number two. It was viewed by those two human beings as a massive vote of non-confidence in the creators who has given you *Watchmen* and *Elecktra: Assassin* less than a year before.

Closer to home for many of you, there's the experience of Todd McFarlane on the adjectiveless *Spider-Man.* I can only speculate what the orders were like on his final issue, but it doesn't take a mathematical whiz to figure out that it was a miniscule percentage of what the first issue sold.

And it's about to happen again.

I, for one, choose to believe Todd when he says that he wants to stick with *Spawn*; that he would like someday to be drawing Issue #50, Issue #75. He is young and he's still learning his craft, but his first issue is certainly a good deal more accomplished and professional than was the first issue of *Cerebus.* But if you order *Spawn* the way that you ordered the adjectiveless *Spider-Man,* the odds are that it won't be around at Issue #10. And *then*, I would guess, Todd would be forced to join in the guessing game game; doing two issue and three issue mini-series, or producing six different number one issues next year of six different characters and instead of having invested in the future of Todd McFarlane and the future of *Spawn,* you will have made of him another issuer of lottery tickets.

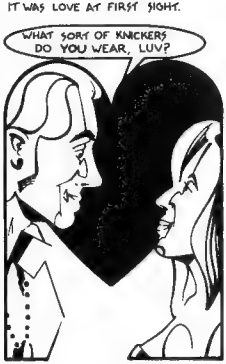
Bone by Jeff Smith is a brilliant comic book. It is self-published and he is currently working on issue five. The first issue came out last July and he is shooting for a bi-monthly schedule, so that will put him just slightly off his intended target. Colleen is a little behind that on *A Distant Soil.* Martin Wagner is moving as fast as he can to get caught up on his commitment to *Hepcats.* I know that if you would all *maintain* your orders on those books, it would go a long way towards assisting them in these efforts. If you increased your orders by even one or two copies — well — let me put it this way. You know how you feel after a weekend when nothing seems to be moving in your stores. You do the work you have to do, deep inside you remain committed to your store and to the comic book medium, but those days are nothing compared to the end of a weekend when three hot sellers are just flying off the shelves; when a book that you thought might be slow sells out

don't you want me?

dc lagan and lm carey

...WHEN I MET YOU.

IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.



I DIDN'T REALISE WHO YOU WERE...

OH, UN-BE-*LIEV*-ABLE! HE'S **MISSED** IT! IT'S NOT OFTEN THAT DAVE WORST MISSES AN OPEN OPPORTUNITY LIKE THAT!

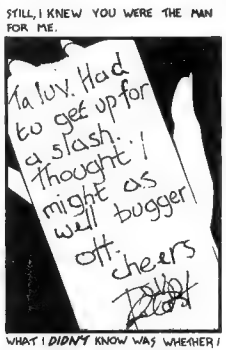
...AT FIRST.

IT WAS MY FIRST TIME, AND YOU MADE IT REALLY SPECIAL.

WHEN I WOKE, YOU WERE **GONE**...

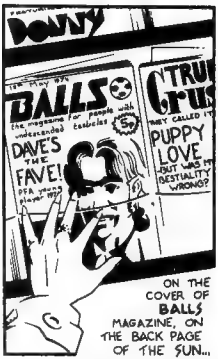
YOU'D GOT MY NAME WRONG.

STILL, I KNEW YOU WERE THE MAN FOR ME.



WHAT I *DIDN'T* KNOW WAS WHETHER I WOULD EVER SEE YOU AGAIN?

I DID OF COURSE...



ON THE COVER OF **BALLS** MAGAZINE, ON THE BACK PAGE OF THE SUN...

...OR IN THE PACKETS OF STICKERS I BOUGHT JUST FOR **YOUR** PICTURE...

WHEN YOU WON THE EUROPEAN CUP VIRTUALLY SINGLE-HANDED, I WATCHED YOU...

WHEN YOU MADE YOUR RECORD, I BOUGHT IT...

♪ BABY, I'M GOING TO NUTMEG MY LOVE RIGHT BETWEEN YOUR LEGS ♪

♪ I'M GOING TO KNOCK MY BALL RIGHT BETWEEN THOSE PEGS ♪

...I EVEN ATE THE CEREAL YOU ADVERTISED,

AT NIGHT, I SLEPT ON MY DAVE WORST SHEETS.

AND THOUGH I SLEPT ALONE, I DREAMT OF YOU...

YOU HAD THE WORLD AT YOUR FEET...

...BUT YOU FELL ON YOUR *ARSE*.

FIRST IT WAS THE **BOOZE**...

THEN IT WAS THE *BIRDS*...

SOON, NO CLUB IN THE LAND WOULD HAVE YOU...

SO YOU SOLD YOUR STORY...

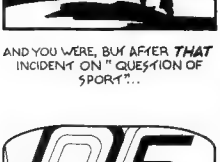
"THE BOMBSHELLS I DROP WILL MAKE *YOUR* BALLS DROP.

"THIS WEEK... ONLY IN THE SUN."

AND THEN YOU JUST DISAPPEARED.

PEOPLE SAID YOU'D DIED, BUT I KNEW YOU'D BE BACK.

AND YOU WERE, BUT AFTER *THAT* INCIDENT ON " QUESTION OF SPORT"...



"*pssst* - YOUR HIGHNESS I HEAR YOU LIKE A BIT OF ROUGH...

"FANCY A SHAG AFTERWARDS?"

...PEOPLE JUST WANTED TO FORGET YOU, TO FORGET WHO YOU'D *BEEN*.

I'D LIKE TO APOLOGISE TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS I CAN ONLY SAY I WAS VERY DRUNK--
...SO I MISTOOK HER FOR DIANA, I WOULDN'T MIND SHAGGING *HER*...

I NEVER FORGOT...

THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANYBODY ELSE...
SAVING ALL ♫ MY LOVE ♪ FOR YOU...
ALTHOUGH I'VE HAD PLENTY OF OFFERS...
ALRIGHT, LUV! DRINK FOR A SHAG?
...I'VE ALWAYS TURNED THEM DOWN.
HERE'S THE DRINK- YOU CAN KEEP THE SHAG.
I USED TO READ ABOUT YOU CAVORTING WITH SOME CELEBRITY OR OTHER...
15th October 1989
Snog MAGAZINE
it's the real thing!"
BUT I KNEW YOU WOULDN'T LAST...
22nd October 1989
Snog MAGAZINE
it's the real thing!"
I KNEW I WOULD GET MY CHANCE...
29th October 1989
Snog MAGAZINE
it's the real thing!"
AND THEN I READ ABOUT YOUR CLUB,"WORSTIES"...
Evening Standard
WORSTIES IN DRUGS AND ANIMAL SEX RAID!
AND HOW YOU WANTED STAFF...
B CENTRE
GENERAL
Barstaff m/f
Must be prepared to show some leg and bit
no 0801
Assistant to 15-16 yr's
Ballet dancers and barely buds
Worsties
...SO HERE I AM

SO HERE YOU ARE..
SO WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR ME?
WELL, I'M NOT REALLY HERE ABOUT THE JOB... I'VE GOT A GOOD ONE.. AS A SINGER- IN THE BAR WHERE WE MET-
IT'S JUST... I HEARD ABOUT YOUR BREAK-UP... AND ... WELL...
LOOK LOVE, YOU'RE TOO OLD FOR BAR-STAFF HERE... I PREFER YOUNG DOLLY-BIRDS MYSELF ..
.. AND MY DAYS OF ONE-NIGHT STANDS ARE OVER, SO...
DON'T...
DON'T YOU WANT ME?

CEREBUS

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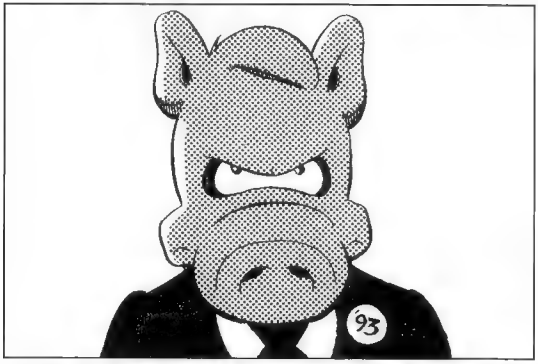
TIL WE SAY IT'S OVER.

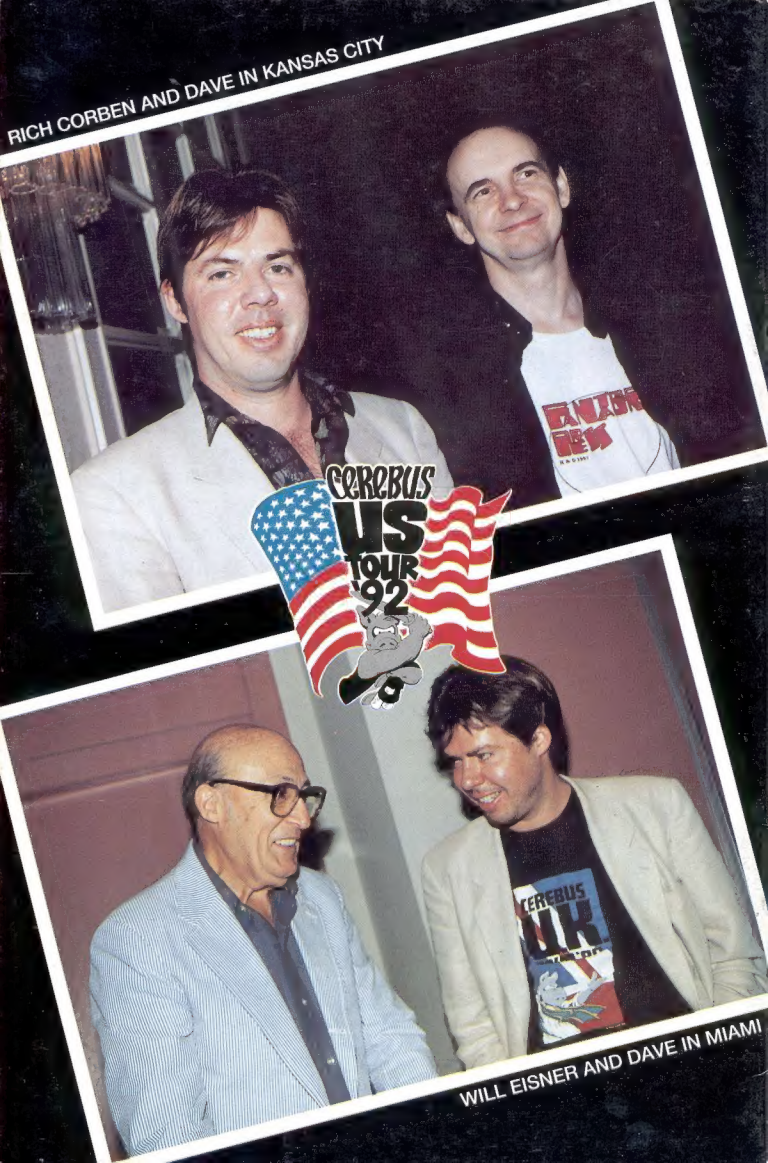
CEREBUS



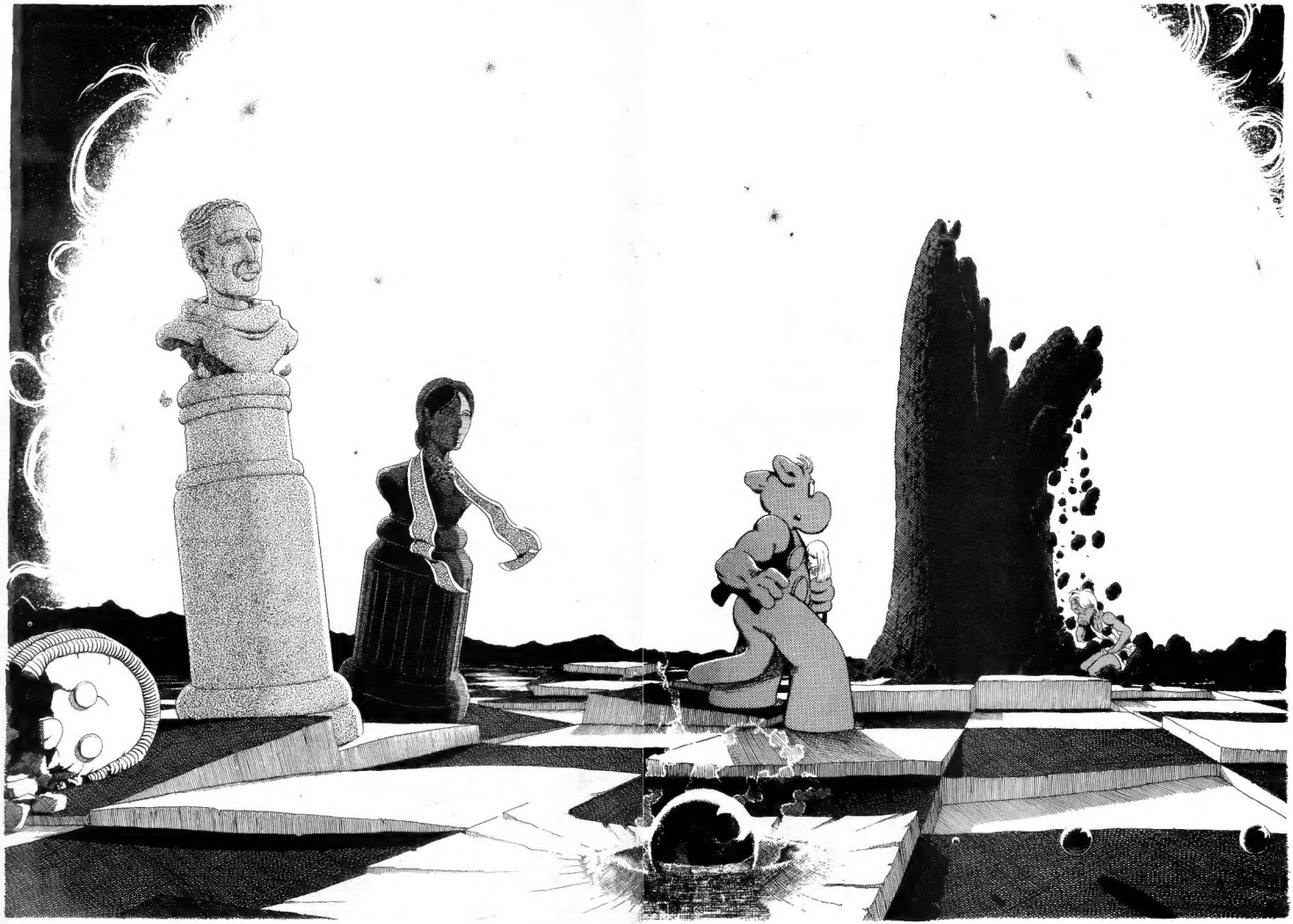
CAMPAIGN

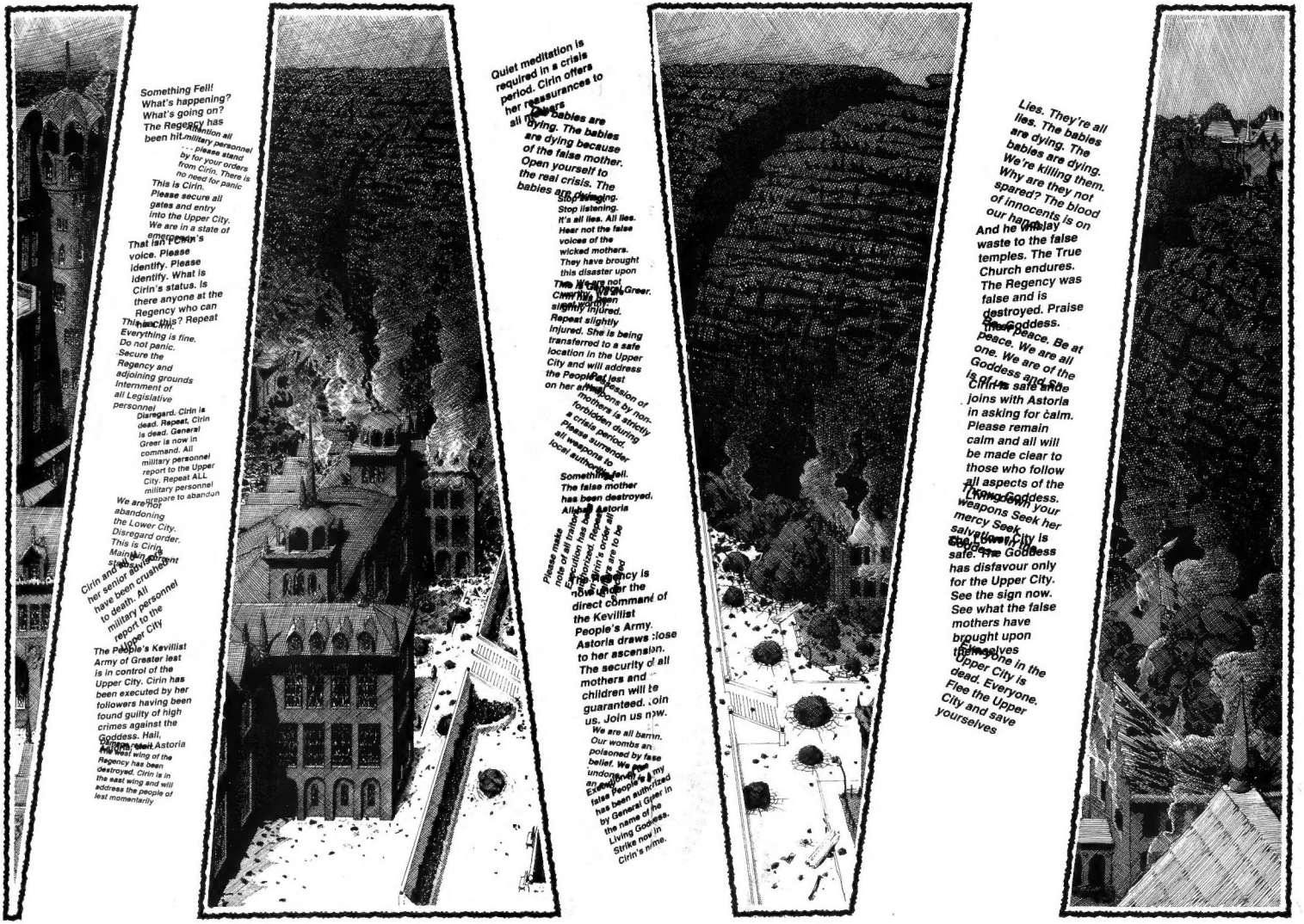
'93

RICH CORBEN AND DAVE IN KANSAS CITY



WILL EISNER AND DAVE IN MIAMI




Something Fell! What's happening? What's going on? The Regency has been hit.
Attention all military personnel ... please stand by for your orders from Cirin. There is no need for panic
This is Cirin. Please secure all gates and entry into the Upper City. We are in a state of emergency.
That isn't Cirin's voice. Please identify. Please identify. What is Cirin's status. Is there anyone at the Regency who can hear this? Repeat
This is Cirin. Everything is fine. Do not panic. Secure the Regency and adjoining grounds Internment of all Legislative personnel
Disregard. Cirin is dead. Repeat, Cirin is dead. General Greer is now in command. All military personnel report to the Upper City. Repeat ALL military personnel
We are NOT abandoning the Lower City. Disregard order. This is Cirin. Maintain
Cirin and her senior advisors have been crushed to death. All military personnel report to the Upper City
The People's Kevillist Army of Greater Iest is in control of the Upper City. Cirin has been executed by her followers having been found guilty of high crimes against the Goddess. Hail, Astoria
All West wing of the Regency has been destroyed. Cirin is in the east wing and will address the people of Iest momentarily
Quiet meditation is required in a crisis period. Cirin offers her reassurances to all Iesters
The babies are dying. The babies are dying because of the false mother. Open yourself to the real crisis. The babies are dying.
Stop listening. Stop listening. It's all lies. All lies. Hear not the false voices of the wicked mothers. They have brought this disaster upon
This is not General Greer. Cirin has been slightly injured. Repeat slightly injured. She is being transferred to a safe location in the Upper City and will address the People of Iest
Forcible removal of children from parents by non-mothers is strictly forbidden during a crisis period. Please surrender all weapons to local authorities
Something Fell. The false mother has been destroyed. Alight Astoria
Please note note of all traitors will be executed. Repeat Cirin's order all traitors are to be executed
The Regency is now under the direct command of the Kevillist People's Army. Astoria draws close to her ascension. The security of all mothers and children will be guaranteed. Join us. Join us now.
We are all barren. Our wombs are poisoned by false belief. We are undone and enslaved by my false People's Army has been authorized by General Greer in the name of the Living Goddess. Strike now in Cirin's name.
Lies. They're all lies. The babies are dying. The babies are dying. We're killing them. Why are they not spared? The blood of innocents is on our hands
And he will lay waste to the false temples. The True Church endures. The Regency was false and is destroyed. Praise the Goddess.
Peace. Be at peace. We are all one. We are of the Goddess and she is
Cirin is safe and joins with Astoria in asking for calm. Please remain calm and all will be made clear to those who follow all aspects of the
Lay down your weapons Seek her mercy Seek salvation. Only
safe. The Goddess has disfavour only for the Upper City. See the sign now. See what the false mothers have brought upon themselves
Everyone in the Upper City is dead. Everyone. Flee the Upper City and save yourselves